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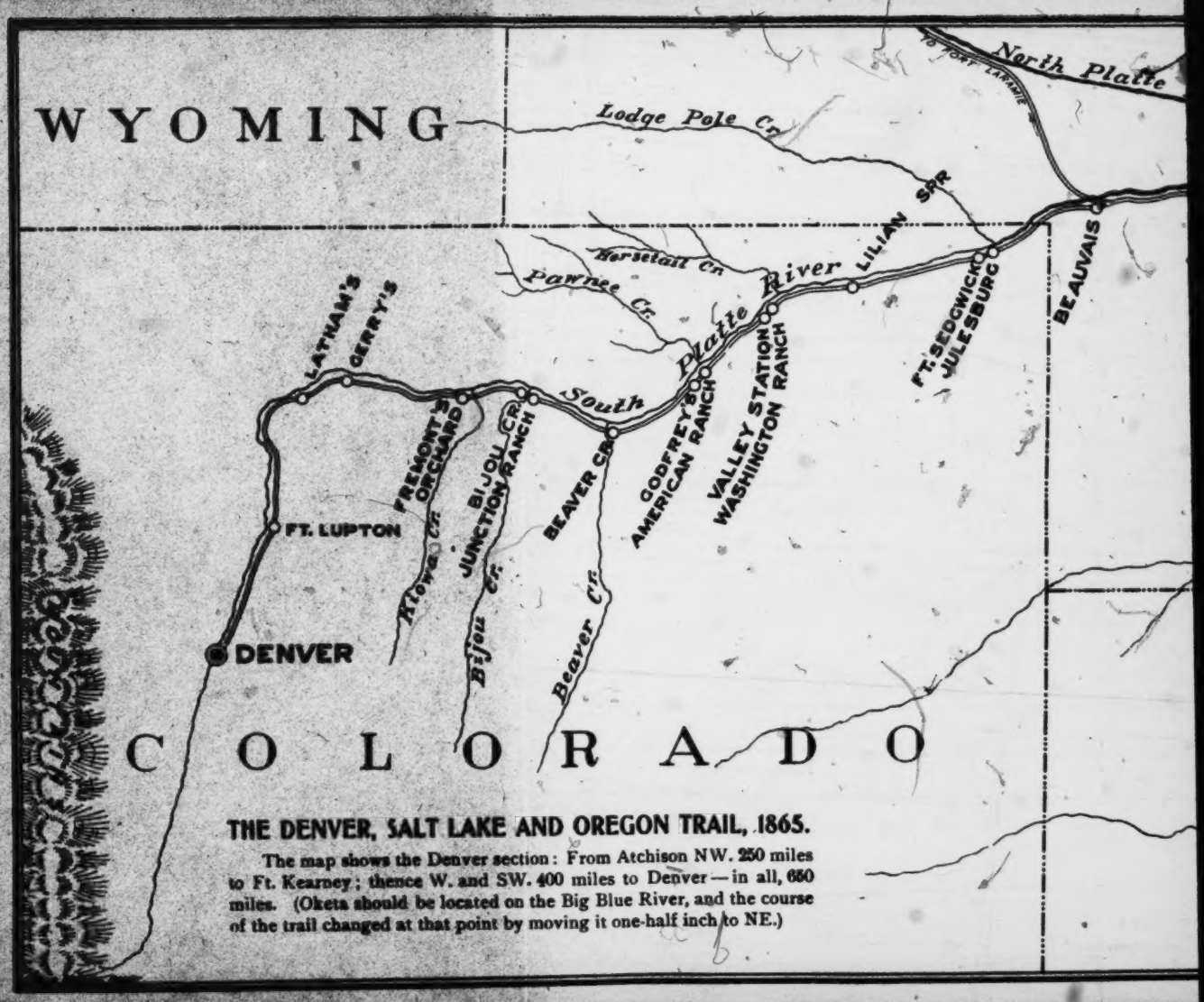
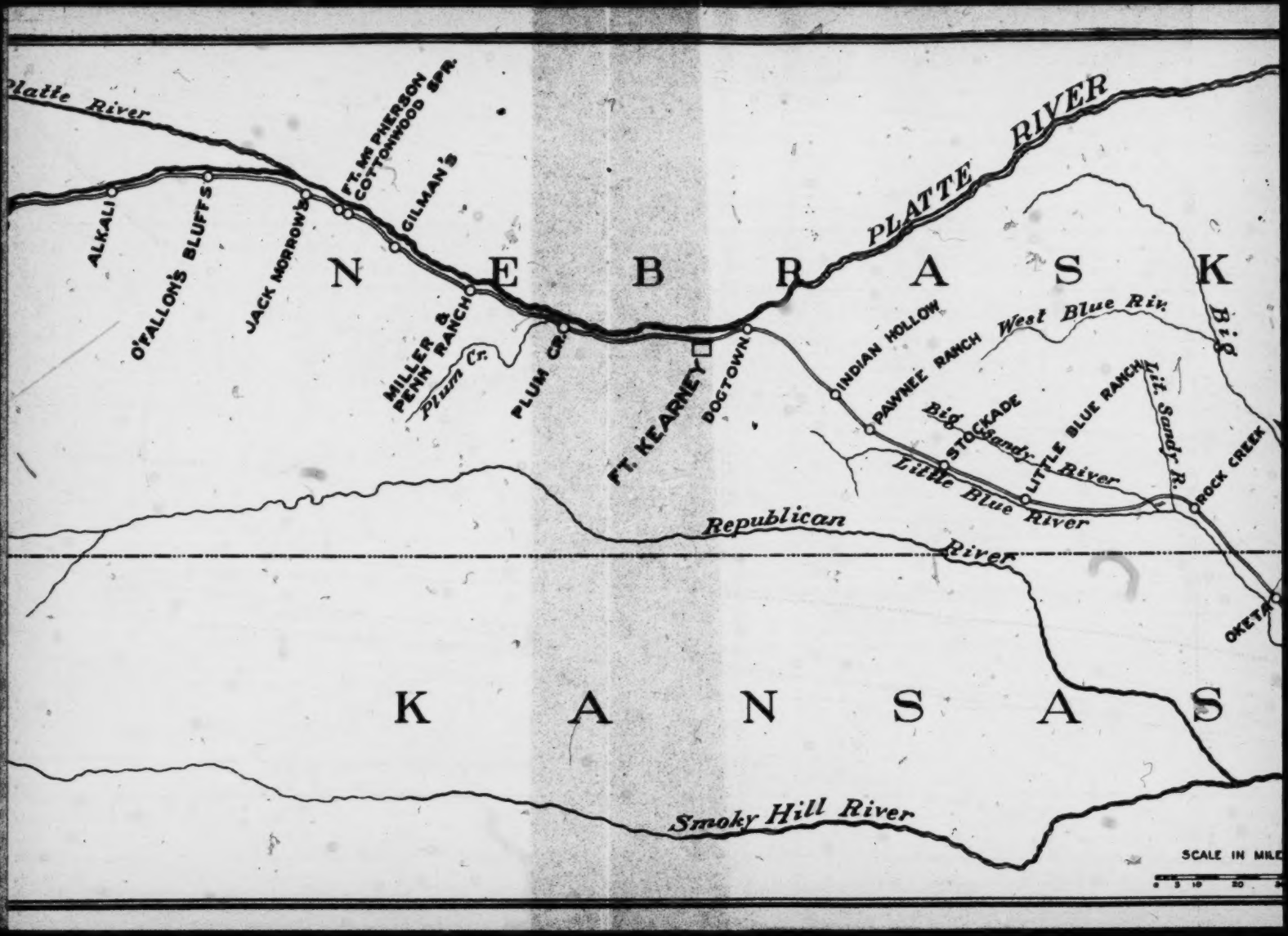


THE DENVER, SALT LAKE AND OREGON TRAIL, 1865.

The map shows the Denver section: From Atchison NW. 250 miles to Ft. Kearney; thence W. and SW. 400 miles to Denver — in all, 650 miles. (Oketa should be located on the Big Blue River, and the course of the trail changed at that point by moving it one-half inch to NE.)


Platte River
ALKALI
O'FALLON'S BLUFFS
JACK MORROW'S
FT. MC PHERSON
COTTONWOOD SPR.
GILMAN'S
MILLER & PENN RANCH
Plum Cr.
PLUM CR.
FT. KEARNEY
DOGTOWN
PLATTE RIVER
INDIAN HOLLOW
PAWNEE RANCH
West Blue Riv.
Big
Big Sandy
STOCKADE
LITTLE BLUE RANCH
Lit. Sandy R.
ROCK CREEK
Little Blue River
Republican River
NEBRASKA
KANSAS
Smoky Hill River
SCALE IN MILE

OMAHA
K
A
Big
Blue
River
ROCK CREEK
MISSOURI
RIVER
ATCHISON
OKETO
SENECA
KENNEKUK
Grasshopper Cr.
Vermillion
Creek
LEAVENWORTH
KANSAS RIVER
ALE IN MILES
30
40

Perhaps those of the Old Colony who received the "Echoes from Arcadia" may find it agreeable — as it is appropriate — to give this volume a place on their shelves beside the first book; as the two are properly companions, and the present narrative may indeed be found to record experiences familiar to those of not a few of the members of the mountain colony on their first journey to the home in the hills.

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THIS IS No. 43

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BY
FRANK C. YOUNG

ACROSS THE PLAINS IN '65.

A Youngster's Journal,

from "Gotham" to "Pike's Peak."

"Toward the great Pacific, marking out
The path of empire."

DENVER, COLORADO, NOVEMBER, 1905.
This (Souvenir) Edition
Privately Printed.

It is forty-six years and more since the great mineral regions of the Rocky Mountains were first opened by hardy pioneers, who dared to advance and locate themselves seven hundred miles beyond the remotest edge of civilization in their search for gold. The intervening country was an unbroken, savage wilderness, save for the two narrow strips of roadway which crossed it two hundred miles apart, one known as the Santa Fe Trail, on the south, which skirted for a part of its way the Arkansas river, and the other the Salt Lake and Oregon Trail, on the north, which bordered and followed the windings of the Platte. These mining pioneers produced gold only, and depended on others as hardy and daring as themselves for the transport over these trails of the supplies necessary to their daily subsistence. These others were the Plainsmen —freighters, ranchemen, muledrivers and bull-

whackers — and in fair weather and foul, and in spite of savage foes, they performed this perilous service for the ten years before the coming of the railroads and the beginnings of settlement by the way. The lives of these men were humble, and their vocations obscure; they have scarcely a place in written history, and they rarely appear even in romantic story, such as often makes picturesque figures of the mining pioneers; but their part in the conquest of the wilderness was indeed a large one: they did many unrecorded heroic deeds, and filled as many unmarked graves. Every story of that adventurous time, however simple, that furnishes even a passing glimpse of them, would seem to be a proper contribution to the real history of the Far West; and every such tale, moreover, should be inscribed to their memory — as this is.

PREFACE.

The reader is warned beforehand that, although this is a narrative of a pilgrimage over the great Plains before the days of railroads in the Far West, he will find herein no record of thrilling adventures, of fights with Indians, of hunts of the buffalo, of hair-breadth escapes, or of any such exciting events as are usually associated in the mind with life or travel beyond the frontier as it used to be.

On the contrary, it is but a prosaic account of a journey of a half-dozen youngsters, afoot, in company with a small wagon train, from the Missouri River to the Rocky Mountains, which happened to be made in an interval of quiet between certain famous Indian raids, at a time when such little settlement as had once been begun on the

Plains had been just wiped out by savage hands. While, therefore, the country along their route was for the time doubly desolate and lonely, these very conditions assisted in assuring them their passage unmolested through to their destination.

The story may lag because of its lack of exciting incident. It has, however, the one merit of being a faithful transcript from rough notes freshly made at each evening's camp-fire, smoothed down only so as to make a more acceptable presentation to the reader; and because of this, it may claim some trifling value as a narrative of a journey which, although eventless in a marked degree, presents some curious and novel aspects when contrasted with the familiar travelling methods of to-day, employed in covering the same territory. Moreover, to quote from Parkman,* "a certain interest will always

*"The Oregon Trail," by Francis Parkman.

attach to the record of that which has passed away, never to return."

It may serve also to suggest a comparison of the present state of the country with its condition as the story tells it, and, in making such comparison, one will not fail to mark how almost ludicrous, in the light of the expansion and development of the intervening years, now appear the utterances of some of our ablest public men, made in the first half of the last century, to whom the trans-Missouri region was as much a land of mystery as is Central Africa to us of to-day. Hark, for instance, to Daniel Webster, in the Senate (about 1840):

> "What do we want with the vast worthless area, this region of savages and wild beasts, of deserts and shifting sands and whirlwinds of dust, of cactus and prairie-dogs? To what use could we ever hope to put these great deserts, or these endless mountain ranges, impenetrable, and covered to their base with eternal snow?"

Listen also to one of his colleagues, Senator McDuffie:

> "As I understand it, there are seven hundred miles this side of the Rocky Mountains that are uninhabitable; where rain never falls; mountains wholly impassable except through gaps and depressions, to be reached only by going hundreds of miles out of the direct course. What are you going to do in such a case? How are you going to apply steam? Have you made an estimate of the cost of a railroad to the mouth of the Columbia? Why, the wealth of the Indies would be insufficient! Of what use would it be for agricultural purposes? I would not for that purpose give a pinch of snuff for the whole territory. I wish the Rocky Mountains were an impassable barrier. If there were an embankment of even five feet to be removed, I would not consent to expend five dollars to remove it and enable our population to go there. I thank God for his mercy in placing the Rocky Mountains there."

The Senator was evidently heated when thus discussing some of the points raised in

the debate on the Ashburton-Webster treaty. Let us read, therefore, the calm conclusions of the gentle Irving, at about the same time, when rounding out his narrative of Captain Bonneville, and referring to the coming natural and final extinction of the fur trade:

> "Some new system of things will succeed among the roving people (the trappers and traders) of this vast wilderness. * * * * An immense belt of rocky mountains and sandy and volcanic plains, several hundred miles in width, represented as incapable of cultivation, must ever remain an irreclaimable wilderness. Here roving tribes of hunters, living in tents and lodges, and following the migrations of the game, may lead a life of savage independence, where there is nothing to tempt the cupidity of the white man. The amalgamation of various tribes and of white men of every nation will in time produce hybrid races like the mountain Tartars of the Caucasus. Possessed as they are of immense droves of horses, should they continue their present predatory and warlike habits they may in time

become a scourge to the civilized frontiers on either side of the mountains."

But gold appeared in due course, "to tempt the cupidity of the white man." The trail of the fur trappers and traders has faded from off the surface of the plain; the Indians have departed for happier hunting grounds, and in their place "white men of every nation" have indeed appeared; but you will scarcely recognize any "hybrid races" — any Rocky Mountain Tartars — among the people who now inhabit this empire, from which they have already carved out so many sovereign states, gridironed by railways and dotted with thriving cities and towns throughout its vast area, and whose border-lines are marked by the Columbia and the Missouri, the Arkansas, and the great Continental Divide.

FRANK C. YOUNG.

DENVER, COLORADO,
November, 1905.

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LANNING BROS.
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DENVER,
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I.

THE RAILROADS.

"Westward Ho!"

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I.

From New York to Atchison.

THERE were three of us who met by appointment about dusk of a day toward the close of February, at the old station of the Hudson River Railroad in New York, equipped for a long journey. My two companions, like myself slender and sallow, were, like myself also, just fresh from city desks, from which we had long wished for release. We had considered the matter for the entire winter (although independently, for we were still new acquaintances), and had all reached the same conclusion — in proof of which we were now met on the threshold of a new career — that there was a strong probability of better things, and with fewer to compete for them, in the new gold country far away to the west, than

in the crowded city and the humdrum pursuits which we had just voluntarily relinquished. Through mutual friends already successfully located in Colorado, we had been brought together — other young fortune-hunters were to join us *en route;* and thus it happened that we found ourselves awaiting the warning cry of the conductor of the six o'clock night express for Troy, and employing the short interval of time yet remaining in saying good-bye to a small group of friends who had come thus far with us, and who gave us "Good luck!" as we jumped on the rear platform of the last car when the train at last began to slowly feel its way out of the station-yard.

Here at last, after several months of pleasant castle-building, seemed the beginning of realization. It was something to know that we had made a start — there could be no possible doubt about that, otherwise the rude shaking up of the old-style car on the light rail would soon have convinced us to the contrary. Then there were our bags and wraps, and various other impedimenta, and the many

sly contrivances we were constantly forced to adopt with these during the evening, in order to retain full possession of two seats in a crowded "day" car — all these not only tended to confirm us in the idea that we were really travelling, but, combined with the excitement natural to the occasion, served also to keep us very wide-awake, notwithstanding the example set us by our fellow-travellers in the car, who one by one made pillows of their rugs or gripsacks, and dozed audibly, sitting upright in their seats, when the pitchy darkness of the winter night finally settled down about the train. There was no sleeping-car to retire to, and, indeed, such a thing on this first stage of the journey would have been only an aggravation, as our it inerary and the conditions of old-time railroading compelled us to leave the train at Troy at midnight, and catch another (if we could), bound westward.

I have called our train the night "express," but this title must not be construed by to-day's standards. I am writing of the railroads of 1865; and when I say that we

covered our first section (to Troy) at something after midnight, I must record also, as worthy of notice, that we were fairly close to our time schedule, as it proved about the one exception of the kind in our entire pilgrimage. This was before the consolidation of the various lines which together covered the distance between New York and Chicago. These embraced more than a half-dozen distinct railroad systems, only one of which was longer than two hundred miles — each entirely independent of the other, and running on time-tables which had been adopted for its own convenience, and with the most supreme indifference to those of its neighbors on either end. Even this would not have been so bad, if each road had only made a fair show of trying to carry out its own promises; but they were apparently as careless of these as they were generally of the comfort of their passengers, and it seemed to be understood among travellers that a margin of two or three hours extra on a run of a couple of hundred miles must first be exhausted before one was entitled to protest.

Well, as I have said, it was after midnight when we reached Troy, and by great good luck we found our westbound train awaiting us, and made the change without trouble. The weather had gradually become colder, and we were soon in the thick of a furious snow-storm. Our new train proved to be a "mail," which stopped at every cross-roads; sleep under the conditions was still out of the question, and when the tedious night at last made way for dawn, we looked with heavy eyes through the frost-dimmed windows over one great, monotonous snow-field, and I have no doubt my comrades silently wondered, as I did, whether a home-leaving could be attended with more depressing conditions.

We trotted along leisurely during the morning of this, the last calendar day of winter, the weather getting colder and our appetites sharper with every mile, until at eleven o'clock we at last reached Rochester, where we and some equally hungry fellow-travellers made such good use of our half-hour stop that, by the time we had finished our breakfast in the

station, there remained in the visible supply but a sorry prospect of "refreshments" for any train that might follow in our wake for several hours. We cheerfully paid each our "six bits" as we filed out at the door, and boarded a train just as it was rolling out, and it had already attained some speed before we discovered it was bound for Suspension Bridge, and that our own was still standing quietly in the yard. A quick jump saved us; we soon "pulled out" in our turn, but with our passenger list increased by a lot of villainous-looking wretches, said to be "bounty-jumpers," bound for Nashville under guard. Without further incident, however, we landed in Buffalo in the middle of the afternoon, sufficiently behind time to miss our next western connection, and with nine hours on our hands in which to amuse ourselves in a strange city. One of my comrades, George, happily remembered that he had a friend resident in Buffalo, and we soon established a connection with him, and through his good offices whiled away the time pleasantly — inspecting the town by daylight,

and taking in a minstrel show in the evening. We naturally absorbed from our friend a good deal of data as to the greatness of the city, and much confident prophecy as to its future; but as our travelling experience thereafter gradually enlarged during our progress westward, we soon came to expect this as a part of the routine.

By midnight we were once more on the track, our next stage being to Erie, which we managed to make in a jog-trot of five hours or more, dozing fitfully in our seats. Without much delay here (but of course only after changing cars) we were allowed to continue on to Cleveland, where we landed toward noon, and celebrated the event by another breakfast, quite equal in volume and in apparent results to the one at Rochester. Here we were joined by Mr. Blank, of Colorado (in whose employ we were to cross the great Plains by-and-by), and another of our party, both of whom had come thus far by the Erie Railroad, would travel with us to Toledo, and again leave us, while we were all finally to meet on the Mis-

sissippi, or beyond. (We reached the West from the Atlantic coast by many devious ways at that time — in fact, the laying out of a route was no small part of the preparation for one's journey.) We had still plenty of time to spare after our late breakfast, and took a ramble of two or three hours through Cleveland's handsome residence avenues; then all came together on the cars again, for a six-hours' run to Toledo — distance, one hundred and twenty miles.

We soon ran out of the snow-belt; forest clearings and rough log cabins began to mark the way, and in these latter we, so lately "of the city," found a novel and interesting topic. Our experience of them had hitherto been limited to illustrations in the story-books; and as we chattered away our old Colorado friend listened amusedly, and told us we would see many more before we again looked upon the brown-stone fronts of Fifth Avenue, or the massive warehouses of Broadway. He and his companion left us at Toledo in the middle of the evening, to continue westward to Chicago,

while our route from here turned off abruptly to the southwest — that is, it would do so after some hours, as, having again missed our "connection," we were booked here until three o'clock in the morning. The night was too dark for a street ramble; so, in company with a number of other wilted-looking travellers, we dozed through the hours as they slowly went by, on the hard benches and in the dismal shelter of the railway station. When our train did at last stop and pick us up, we found there was a sleeping-car attached, and we were all in bed in a minute, and sound asleep in another, after nearly three nights of wakeful misery.

I should like to describe this car, but my journal gives me no help. "Sleepers" were few and far between on the trains of those days. They were built and owned by the few roads that operated them, and their construction was as crude as their equipment was primitive and scant. This one of ours certainly had bunks in it, and a toilet-bowl and water-tank, with a half-dozen towels, more or less

fresh, at each end; but beyond these items I can remember no special feature in which it differed from the ordinary "day" coach. I know we accepted it then without thought of criticism, and presume it was the best of its kind up to date; but looking back now, after thirty-five years or more of the gradual evolution of the luxurious modern "Pullman," I can easily imagine what a caricature it would appear to-day.

By eight in the morning we turned out of our berths, as we were passing through Fort Wayne, Indiana, and soon after we penetrated great forests, with crude-looking little frame villages at intervals in the clearings. The forests all gradually thinned out during the morning, and by noon we were in an open country, which a few hours later, at State Line (between Indiana and Illinois), broadened into a great prairie, as flat as a floor. Here we changed cars again to the Great Western Railway of Illinois, which was to take us to Quincy; meantime, as there appeared to be no occasion for hurry, we went in to dinner. The style of

the food and the service, the waiter-girls, our companions at the tables, the rough station building itself, and the vast prairie as we saw it through the windows, all impressed us greatly by their novelty, and we began to feel that we were really getting far from home — almost out on the frontier, in fact. I smile broadly as I read now the boyish comment in my journal at this point: "Passengers all Western people, and rather rough in dress and manner!"

A few miles out on our new road the engine slid off the track, and we had an hour in which to wander about the train, and contemplate the vastness of "The greatest prairie in Illinois, stranger!" as one of our passengers informed us: above us, a cold-looking, sullen sky, and beneath and around us an immense, absolutely bare plain of light brown earth, with miles of unobstructed view on every hand — all dismal and monotonous enough at this bleak season of the year. Soon after, the cars were overloaded with several companies of soldiers raw recruits — picked

up at some cross-roads station, and bound for a camp at Springfield, and for a few hours they ran amuck in the train. Happily we dropped them again by dark, and then we worked our way through to the forward car to find the conductor, and learn the prospects of his picking up a "sleeper," only to return disappointed, and to arrange our wraps so as to make the long, cold night ride before us as little wearisome as possible. There was no help for it, and no relief until at four in the morning we were whirled away from the train in a 'bus to the Quincy House, where we tumbled into bed without undue ceremony or loss of time.

A beautiful, sunny, mild morning, after some hours of sleep, speedily put a new face on everything, and we again felt ready for any misadventures that might befall us. A pleasant walk about town, and then at one o'clock down to the ferry to cross the great Mississippi. Here three more of our party joined us, who had come in during the night by a different road. It was odd to see no slab-

sided slip — to have no rattling of chains or bumping up against a covered floating dock, with a mad rush of a hurrying crowd to get aboard, such as we had always been accustomed to in old Gotham. Our ferry-boat was but a placid-looking old scow, moored to posts on the beach, with a single deck, roofed to enclose a small, stuffy cabin, filled to its capacity with a rough-looking, rugged, scrawny crowd — apparently good-natured and quiet enough, but disposed to be somewhat curious as to ourselves, whom they at once recognized as "strangers and pilgrims." We stood so closely packed together that the captain elbowed his way through with difficulty to collect his "one dime" fare, which he did on the voyage over — a matter of twenty minutes of yawing this way and that, broadside of a strong current.

On the Missouri side we boarded a "scratch" train of not much above the grade of cattle cars, for an hour's run to Palmyra Junction, where we caught the main line of the Hannibal and "St. Joe" Railroad, for what

was practically the last stage of our railway journey. The road was (of course) a single track, fearfully and wonderfully laid. It measured two hundred and six miles from Hannibal on the Mississippi to St. Joseph on the Missouri, and ran one passenger train daily, purporting to do so in sixteen hours, but frequently allowing itself sixty; and if a week passed without a fairly serious accident, it was something to be discussed and recorded. As it was the only road, however, beyond the Mississippi, which then connected the two great rivers, one had no alternative except to foot it, or buy a team and drive over. A journey over the road even at its best was something to be remembered; and because of its many peculiar features and erratic habits, irreverent travellers, of the commercial class — always keen and witty observers — had dubbed it "The Horrible and Slow-Jogging Railroad." There was a grim fitness in a part of this title that may not have been intended by the jokers. The road penetrated the heart of Missouri — a

district long infested by guerillas, and the scene of much of the misery of border warfare; and of this the road's passengers were often involuntary witnesses. Many times had the trains been stopped, either for loot or in search of Union soldiers, and more than once, indeed, had some poor fellow, betrayed by his blue coat, been forcibly taken from a passenger car by a file of irregulars, and summarily shot by the roadside. Order reigned, however, in these closing days of the War when we made our journey over it, and we met with adventures no more exciting than the sight of a prairie on fire during the night.

We had a "sleeper," crowded like the rest of the train. Late in the evening we made room for the "one more" passenger — a sad-looking, careworn woman with a child, taken on at some obscure station of the dreary rolling prairie. Jim and I were glad to give up one berth to her, and divide another for the rest of the night by alternately turning in and out every two hours — the one on watch partly employing his waking time in keeping

the stove at the end of the car supplied with logs from the wood-box, as the weather was very cold, and the haughty colored gentleman who managed the car seemed to have retired early.

The morning sun smiled on us as we ran into "St. Joe," fairly on time; and after we had taken care of a good breakfast, we did our last little bit of railroading for about eighteen miles on a branch line down the river, which brought us to Winthrop, the point at which we could embark for Atchison. The latter town we found to be on the far side of the "Big Muddy;" so was the ferry-boat, and as the stream was full of ice, the prospect before us was very doubtful. After a wait of several hours, however, we noticed the boat slowly moving out from the western shore; in a half-hour we were all aboard of it, bag and baggage, and after another half-hour of cautiously picking our way through the masses of floating ice, which threatened every moment to stave a hole in the boat as the powerful current drove them against its side,

we at last stepped ashore in Kansas, and relieved our feelings by a mild cheer at the thought that this first stage of our pilgrimage was happily ended, although it had been by no means lacking in interest.

Justus was on the lookout for us, and in a few minutes we were in pleasant quarters at the Tremont House. Justus had already spent a year or more in Colorado; had gone to "the States" for a winter's visit, and lately on his return had been acting temporarily as clerk at the little hotel, while awaiting the arrival of our party, which he was himself to join. He was therefore in a position to make us quite as comfortable as we should have been at the slightly more pretentious "Massassoit" across the street, which we didn't feel able to patronize. This latter hotel monopolized the custom of the overland coach passengers, who, as "express" travellers, were considered relatively "first-class," while we were only "pilgrims," seeking the cheapest way to our goal.

It was about the middle of Saturday after noon when we thus reached Atchison; and, as we had left New York on Monday evening, our journey had therefore occupied just five days. We had, however, travelled as continuously as possible; our stops by the way were enforced, and we were only too eager to avail ourselves promptly at each stage of such travelling facilities as offered to further our progress. It had required ten changes of cars and two ferriages to cover the distance, which roundly measures perhaps fourteen hundred miles; and while there were other routes available, such as some of our party followed to reach the same destination, they presented quite as many gaps and breaks as ours, and the time we made from New York to "the River" was about the average, as railroads were then operated.

The evolution of the twoscore years since then in railway methods causes these old road experiences of ours to stand in sharp and curious contrast with such as attend the traveller of to-day, whose unbroken, continuous

routes by rail measure anywhere from a thousand to two thousand miles or more, let him travel over the country in whatsoever direction he may. If he is bound for Colorado — Denver, we will say — he steps aboard a sumptuous "Pullman" at New York, and only leaves it next day at Chicago to enter another, quite as sumptuous and within the same station, which deposits him at his destination within a total of little more than fifty hours after starting, and without his having burdened his mind for a moment with such irksome matters as "changes" or "connections;" but, if he be minded to take any note of his progress by the way, he sees forty miles of distance vanish behind him with every circuit of the minute-hand round his watch-dial, continuously throughout his journey. He sits in cleanliness and comfort through the day, amid luxurious surroundings, and within a few feet, if he so choose, of a library of current literature; he may consult, near by, a stock-list, with the changing figures of the passing hour in Wall Street, which have been gathered from the air

without the abatement of a jot in the speed of the rushing train — and if need be, he may by the same agency throw a message *en route* into space, to provide, let us say, for some home matter overlooked in the hurry of departure.* A bath-room and a barber's chair are at his service at one end of the car, if he would make a toilet at any stage of the journey; a buffet is within easy reach, to supply him with liquid and other comforts of a quality and variety such as he has just left behind him at home or club; at convenient intervals a meal awaits him in an adjoining car, such as any hotel of good repute might not disdain to furnish, and which he can enjoy and dawdle over at his leisure; and finally, after darkness falls, he can turn into a comfortable bed whenever his humor dictates. These are sybaritic travelling conditions, truly, but they are such as prevail to-day, and they are all

*This may seem a little rash, but as its practicability has been demonstrated, and one railway is actually preparing to instal such a system as this book goes to press, I feel I am not anticipating events very much, and am inclined to let the statement stand as first written.

accepted and expected as a matter of course. Still is it not possible that, while thus luxuriously rushing through space, the journey loses much of the interest that attached to the old-time methods, the very deliberation of which, with their many breaks and pauses, and roughnesses and crudities, indeed, opened the way for incident in infinite and entertaining variety, and usually of a character less likely to pall than the eventless progress of the modern train, with its almost redundant luxury?

By the next day (Sunday) Mr. Blank arrived with the last member of our party, agreeably to the terms of our rendezvous, fixed weeks ago in the far East. We were seven, and all from New York or "up the River." Justus is to be mentioned first, because he had two legitimate claims to prominence: he was the oldest man in the party — twenty-four (the others ranging all the way down to eighteen) — and had already crossed and recrossed the Plains, and in the interval had had at least a year's experience among the

gold mines. Little wonder, then, that we youngsters, for a time at least, regarded him with a dash of deference. He was originally from Kingston — a genial comrade, unassuming and good-natured, though perhaps a trifle easy-going and deliberate for the aggressively enterprising frontier country.

Next him came Norman, from Cornwall, in the Hudson Highlands — a fine specimen of muscular humanity, who had already "sailed the seas over," and met with plenty of hard knocks before the mast of a whaler, in which he got as far away from home as the coast of Siberia. Not the least of his other qualifications was a fine natural baritone, which afterwards did good service many an evening before a Plains camp-fire.

Then there were two who had come down together from the farms of the upper Hudson — Jim and Chris. Jim was a plain, sterling, honest lad, who climbed his garden-wall and started out into the world with a serious purpose which he ever kept steadily before him, and with a Scotch-Irish thrift that afterwards

brought him substantial reward. His associate, Chris, was a sturdy farmer boy, fresh and green as his native meadows. He had a suggestive surname, however, and he was not with the party two days before he was rechristened "Dick," after the Turpin of romantic history. The name seemed to fit somehow, and it stuck to him forever after. Poor, unsophisticated Dick! Often have I since wondered if you ever afterward came to suspect how much was due to you of the boisterous hilarity that lightened many an otherwise gloomy day or cheerless march. You were the victim of much raillery that most men would have found it hard to bear, but which your extreme good nature never resented until, "as it fell upon a day," it perhaps dawned upon you suddenly that forbearance had ceased to be a virtue; and I can still recall the curious gleam in your eye as you snatched your rifle out of the wagon one day, in the gray solitude of the mid-Plains, and served notice on your persecutors that the time had come to call a halt! I am glad at

the same time to remember that that was the nearest approach to a rupture that our party ever had to record.

Our three other members comprised George and Ed, who had come with me from New York, and myself, and we need no further description than I have already given in my first few lines — three slim-chested city lads, striking out in quest of fortune. An eighth member, hitherto a stranger, joined us before we left Atchison — young Phil Brown, who arrived from New York at about the same time as ourselves. His equipment of a very complete Plains outfit, which included a fine rifle and considerable expertness in handling it, made him an acceptable addition to the party, and we took him "on trust" as to his other qualifications.

Atchison was of relatively much greater importance in this spring of 1865 than is the larger town of to-day. In Parkman's time (1846), and for many years thereafter, the common rendezvous for the Plains had been

Independence or Westport, fifty miles below, on the Missouri side of the river; but the opening of Kansas to settlement, and the completion of the railroad westward to "the River," resulted finally in moving it to the north and making it a choice between the two towns on either bank. "St. Joe" had enjoyed some brief glory in '60 and '61 as the starting point of the famous Pony Express, and was now Atchison's strongest rival in outfitting freight and pilgrim trains for the West, from the fact of its being the western terminal of the only railroad then connecting the Missouri with the East; but Atchison's location on the west bank of the river gave it a decided advantage as the natural starting point for westbound travellers and goods.

Indeed, any doubts on this head would have been speedily settled by a view of the thousands of tons of mining machinery and the vast variety of freights destined for "Pike's Peak" and the great newly-opened mining regions of the Northwest, which often lay for months along the roadside, from the centre of

the town down to the river's bank, awaiting their turn for shipment by the immense wagon trains that daily through the freighting season started out on their long journey over the great highway; or by a walk through the busy streets, now alive with the bustle of the opening season, and by a glance into the outfitting stores, where could be had anything from a "Schuttler" wagon and a pair of mules to a sombrero or a paper collar: great stocks especially of canned provisions and fruits (these at that time mostly limited to sardines, oysters, tomatoes and peaches); all the staple supplies of a Plains outfit — rifles, revolvers, ammunition, clothing, tents and blankets. It was here also that the incoming pilgrim, eastward bound, could just as readily sell the wagon and team which had brought him down from the Mountains: the town was, in fact, a general exchange market for all who lived, or toiled, or travelled beyond "the River," by which term the Missouri was generally known over all the two thousand miles of wilderness that lay between it and the Pacific; and it

furnished also about the last little bit of civilized life that one would see for many weary weeks or months when he once turned his back upon it and journeyed westward.

One other feature which contributed largely to the town's importance was the fact of its being the eastern starting point of the overland stage line, whose "Concord" coaches made the journey of nineteen nundred miles to Placerville (California) in nineteen days. These, with six horses or mules pulling them, and carrying nine "insides" and a half-dozen on top, besides the mails and baggage and the express chest, made a gallant show, and were famous in their day as the perfected type of fast travelling; one hundred miles in twenty-four hours, running night and day, with fresh animals every ten or fifteen miles, over the unsettled and comparatively unknown western half of the continent — embracing the rolling prairies, the great Plains, the wild and rugged passes of the Rocky Mountains, the desolate waste of the great Nevada basin, and the snowy heights of the Sierras — seemed a great

achievement, as indeed it was under the prevalent conditions. The six-days' coach ride from the River to Denver was then as much a triumph of enterprise as is the fifteen-hours' "limited express" journey of to-day, made possible by the conditions of modern railroading.

While the town was a point of general rendezvous for those who were going out to tempt fortune in the gold mines, either as coach passengers or pilgrims, it was also largely the winter abiding place of those who, in the pursuit of their regular business as "freighters" during the season, drove out the ox or mule teams in the wagon trains which carried freight and supplies to the mining camps of Colorado, Idaho, Bannock (Montana), and far Oregon — journeys requiring months of slow, tedious toiling, and rarely free from hardship and danger. Their route lay along the same road as that covered by the coaches, and held a course northwest for some two hundred and fifty miles out of Atchison, when it struck the Platte river at Fort Kearney — thence along

its southern border four hundred miles to Denver for the Colorado trains; while those for California and the Northwest crossed the Platte near Julesburg, and followed the North Fork to old Fort Laramie, thence by the Sweetwater and through the Great South Pass; then, for California, southwest by Fort Bridger, the Great Salt Lake and the Humboldt Basin; or, for the Northwest, by Fort Hall, the Snake and the Columbia rivers: thousands of miles through the wilderness of prairie, plain, mountain, park, cañon and desert, much of it through hostile Indian country; making a daily progress of ten, or sometimes twelve to fifteen miles in the best weather; frequently a tedious "lay-up" for days, to permit exhausted stock to recruit after a period of storm; now and then a hunt for miles over the prairie for cattle stampeded by hostiles, or strayed away from camp in search of better pasture; and often again a falling by the wayside of head after head of worn-out animals which shortly after mark the line of the road by their white, glistening

bones. Such were the common conditions under which these knights of the road earned their pay; but the life seemed to have its attractions for them, and the little town held many who had grown bronzed and gray in the service.

There was a fair contingent of Pike's Peak miners scattered here and there through the place, most of whom had been wintering in "the States," and who were now loitering in Atchison on their return, waiting for spring to open up before starting out. These would gather around our hotel stove, and regale us nightly with stories of their experiences in the Mountains, which we drank in with avidity, for of course we looked upon them as oracles. There was mingled with all this a good deal of "Indian" talk — some fact and much fancy, no doubt — which was brought out by the very recent fall and winter raids, some of which had extended eastward almost to within a hundred miles of the River; indeed, we had in the hotel itself one of the numerous families which had been driven in from their

Kansas frontier farms, and for whom the place had become a city of refuge for the winter. Our family had left a burning home behind them, and from them we got at first hand stories of Indian savagery, told with an intensity of bitterness born of personal suffering. The town was full of Indian rumors: the chances of fresh raids as soon as spring should open; the reports brought in by the last coach-driver; the danger of starting out except in large companies amply armed — these were always uppermost in the conversation, whomsoever one might talk with, and we got such large doses of it day and night, on the street and in the common room of the hotel, from both miners and Plainsmen, as certainly did not contribute to our mental comfort when contemplating the prospects of our intended journey; and in fact, many other sorts of calamities were predicted for us, should we carry out our expressed purpose of starting out by ourselves as soon as the weather favored us.

We spent Sunday quietly, attending

service in a bright, clean little meeting-house that, from its appearance and that of its people, one might easily imagine to have been just transplanted bodily from some New England or Middle States village. On Monday began the serious business of the expedition. Mr. Blank was bound for the mines himself, by coach, but before starting was to buy two wagons and teams to transport his freight — quicksilver in tanks and staple provisions, the carrying profit on which would easily reimburse him at the western end for his entire outlay for rolling stock and motive power; and these were to be put in our charge, to reach the Mountains at such indefinite time after his arrival as roads, weather and Indians might permit. He finally secured one medium-sized "prairie schooner," with a capacity of, say, five thousand pounds, and with two span of mules for motive power; and one much smaller, light-running wagon, with one team of horses. This was put in Norman's charge, while Jim was made captain of the mule teams, a task which required patience, per-

sistence and muscle, and, according to most Plains authorities, a large reserve of profanity, to be brought out on emergency, and used with good judgment — all rather trying for an amateur, and a naturally good-natured fellow such as Jim was — as the Plains mules, especially the old stagers, were said to be so sagacious as to know whether or not it was a seasoned hand that was doing the swearing, and to be quick to take advantage of a greenhorn. I may say here, however, that after our first hundred miles or so, Jim made considerable progress toward a choice vocabulary, and if he had continued in the profession, might in time have graduated with honors; though he could never have hoped to reach the grotesque perfection exhibited by some of the drivers of the Government trains that we occasionally met or overtook, when stalled in some unusually exasperating hole in the prairie.

Then came the matter of our provisions and supplies. I was made purser of the expedition, and found plenty of work for a day or two in getting together such a quantity and

variety of eatables as might make ample rations for eight hungry youngsters for a period of, say, two months. These included flour, coffee, sugar, hams and bacon, crackers, beans, dried apples, molasses, lard, a cheese, a trifle of tea, some potatoes, and a few smaller items — all plain staples, but a luxurious list compared to the usual supplies of the regular Plainsman, which were generally restricted to flour, coffee and bacon. Then there were individual purchases to be made of blankets, or woolen shirts, or ammunition, or some one of many items overlooked at starting from home, or suggested as necessary when making the rounds of this experienced and well-stocked outfitting post of the frontier. Our freight was such as could be stowed snugly and evenly on the floor of the wagons, so that we should have ample room in addition in which to pack away our own baggage and supplies, and still leave, especially in the "schooner," plenty of space under the canvas cover in which to spread our blankets and bunk for the night. Our packing was system-

atically done with a view to this, and thus we were never, on our whole journey, without shelter at night, unless the fancy seized some one to roll up in his blanket and stretch himself out on the tempting green of the prairie, as it sometimes did toward the western end, where the new grass had already acquired some growth when we passed over it.

By the middle of the week we were all ready for a start, when the thermometer made a sudden drop away below zero, and we were apparently thrown back into the depth of winter. There was no reason, however, why Mr. Blank should wait, as one could contrive to make himself comfortable inside the coach, with plenty of rugs and wraps; so on Wednesday morning he left us, in company with a young New Yorker, who had become interested in some mining ventures, and who was able to indulge in the luxury of coaching it. As we bade them good-bye, we promised to follow by the next day; but the weather still continued unfriendly, and while we were lying idly by, with nothing to do, it occurred to the whole

company simultaneously that we had neglected one item of the highest importance: we had not yet been photographed! Within fifteen minutes every bag or trunk belonging to the expedition was open, and its contents strewn about the room, while the boys arrayed themselves in their new Plains toggery — blue shirts, overalls, soft hats, hunting boots, etc. — and after another quarter-hour we were all standing before a camera, with a half-distracted photographer trying to get a group of eight, with their various accoutrements, properly posed within its focus. Dick Turpin was decidedly the picturesque figure of the *ensemble.* He had dressed himself in gallant array, and by utilizing all his new possessions of rifle, pistol, knife and belt, appeared a quite dangerous-looking Indian fighter; but his anxiety to figure prominently in the picture in his rakish-looking frontier rig quite baffled for a time the artist's efforts, and it was long before he was able to complete a grouping to his own satisfaction — and catch it "on the fly" — in which any one of the party could

be distinguished from another by the admiring relatives to whom the pictures were sent in the mail that carried East our last "good-byes."

The weather had improved materially by the next day, Friday; but of course nobody begins a journey of any length on a Friday, and while we were not a whit superstitious — certainly not — we were generally agreed that it would be well to wait over, which we did. From this point on, let the journal tell the story in its own way.

II.

THE ROLLING PRAIRIES

* * * "They stretch
In airy undulations far away,
As if the ocean, in his gentlest swell,
Stood still, with all his rounded billows fixed
And motionless forever."

II.

From Atchison to Fort Kearney.

First Day: — It is Saturday, the 11th of March, when we at last make a start — a spring morning so balmy, and clear and beautiful, that it is hard to realize that we were hugging the stove three days ago, with the mercury at ten "below:" but we may have yet much to learn of the vagaries of the Kansas climate. It is such a seductively bright day, however, as to leave us no excuse for loitering longer in this comfortable, busy little town, where we have made some good friends, who mingle with their last words of caution about the ubiquitous Indian, their warmly expressed hopes that we shall get through safely and speedily. The last odds and ends of baggage and outfit are thrown

aboard, the boys have driven around to the front of the pleasant little hotel, and by eleven o'clock the little caravan really begins to move on its long pilgrimage.

Our kind-hearted landlady, after all her scoldings at the boisterous ways of "those New York boys" during the week, comes to the door at the last minute with a great paper bag of her own molasses cakes, which, she says, "will come in handy for a lunch"— bless her old heart! There is even a suspicious moisture about her eyes as she in a cheery way shouts a "good-bye" after us. We believe that we are almost the first to take the road this season, and we know that our friends look upon us as green and perhaps therefore rather venturesome young "tenderfeet," and are really troubled on account of our starting out alone; but with our exuberant spirits, and in our keen enjoyment of the bustle everywhere about us, we probably don't at the time estimate their solicitude at its proper value. We are all afoot except the drivers, and as we slowly round the corner to get on to

the highway, we turn and wave our hats in a parting salute, with the lightest of hearts. In a half-hour more, as we descend into one of the hollows of the prairie, the last little steeple of the town sinks from view like a ship hull-down at sea, and we are at last fairly on our way, with our faces toward the land of the setting sun.

It is rather a pretty farming country for the first few miles, and a good enough high road, except that its up-and-down-hill course over the rolling prairie does not admit of fast travelling. We plod along steadily at an easy walk, and in a couple of hours overtake a Plains "outfit" of even smaller proportions than our own — a prairie schooner much like ours, loaded with freight, and pulled by two span of mules driven by a stocky, surly-looking youngster of twenty or so, with the proprietor, a long, lanky individual, riding behind on a horse as lanky as himself. Unmistakably from "Pike County," and as certainly bound for "Pike's Peak" — a conjecture soon confirmed by the man himself,

who tells us his name is Eldridge, and who falls into line with us at once, and proves to be a good-hearted, easy-going comrade — although a trifle slouchy, both in person and outfit. We wonder why he should have associated himself with such a sullen, boorish degenerate as the fellow who drives his mules, for the chances are that many times between this and the Mountains the two will camp together alone on the great Plains, and the enforced comradeship will be anything but desirable — although none of us can of course make the faintest guess at what proves the startling sequel. The brute resists all our well-meant efforts at striking up an acquaintance, and we soon give it up and let him go his own way.

Toward the end of the afternoon we have covered ten miles, to Lancaster, where we find a nice little creek and a fine camping ground, and as we conclude we have done enough for a first day's breaking-in, we pull up and make camp, Eldridge locating a few hundred yards further on. The various details of camp duty

are quickly settled upon, and assignments made and accepted with cheerful alacrity, and (in the vernacular of the road) with as little "back talk" as though we were a part of an organized and disciplined train, and under the orders of an autocratic wagon-master. The drivers look after their stock, but are entitled to expect supper ready to their hands without further effort, after their day's road work; and Dick is assigned to them as chief hostler and roustabout. One of the unskilled contingent gathers the firewood and fetches the water, while another becomes slavey to his highness the cook, whose office falls to Ed, because of his seductive tales of the wonderful bread and surpassing coffee that he furnished his mess during his recent year's service in the army. It is of course tacitly understood that there is to be no "sogering," for our boys are all good fellows, and don't need to be told that the general well-being depends on all turning in with a hearty good will, and submitting also to a fair measure of discipline whenever the situation demands it.

We get out our little prairie cook-stove, and start our first fire; also our camp kit, which among other things provides each member with a tin plate, cup and spoon, and a knife and fork of cheap plated ware, all of which in their newness glisten in the sunlight as brightly as would the finest silver, and are quite as serviceable. A blanket is spread out on the old grass, by way of a table-cloth, and we get everything quickly under way for supper. The air soon becomes fragrant with the aroma of coffee, and musical with the grateful sound of sizzling ham; we are all healthfully hungry, and there is no stint; the prairie sward is springy and restful, even if not yet green, and the mess adapt themselves to it in all varieties of posture according to individual inclination, and as though fully alive to the fact that there is no scarcity of room.

There is quite enough wild shrubbery to furnish a background to the white-covered wagons, which, partly dismantled, seem to be themselves consciously enjoying a rest. There

are also many bits of color in the rough Plains rigs of the various human figures of the *ensemble*, worn with a careless grace; and in the soft light of the declining day the scene is by no means lacking in picturesqueness, which, however, would be somewhat enhanced if the bristling, rigid outlines of the mules could adjust themselves to such graceful poses as the horses naturally fall into when lazily moving about in search of a choice tuft of buffalo grass here and there, before settling down to the hearty measures of grain that their drivers are preparing for them in separate messes laid out on gunnysacks in sheltered nooks of the camp-ground. The effect of the whole is restful in the extreme; and later on, under the soothing influence of the after-supper pipes, we wonder where the disagreeable features of "roughing it" are to come in. Still later, in supreme content, we roll ourselves up in our buffaloes and blankets — for the night turns cold — on top of the freight in our wagons, with a beautiful full moon shining placidly down upon us, and we sleep undis-

turbed by any hubbub from the near-by "town" of Lancaster, which, by the way, embraces just two wayside inns and a farm-house.

SUNDAY, *March 12th*, Second Day: This is as lovely a Sunday morning as one could imagine. As we tumble out at six o'clock, and sniff the delicious air of the prairie, it seems to us as if this is likely to be a continuous picnic, and we are much inclined to laugh derisively as we recall the many doleful warnings that have been so lately dinned into our ears. We certainly see no reason as yet for any special anxiety regarding our immediate future — always, of course, barring the ever-present Indian bug-a-boo. We are perfectly equipped for the road: our stock start out in fine condition, with wagons and harness new and strong; our freight with our own traps makes just a fair, average load, snugly packed away in each wagon; we are well provisioned for two months, with every youngster in perfect health, and without a single care, unless indeed it may be as to the length of the

intervals between meals; we have seven hundred miles ahead of us of independent travel, which we hope to parcel out, free from control, into just such lengths of "day's work" as may suit our royal convenience, so long as we deliver teams and freight to their owner at the western end in a reasonable time; and this tremendous measure of miles must surely hold a fair promise of novel adventures of one kind or another: besides, do they not cross the country of romance itself — the very prairies and Plains of Fremont and Kit Carson? the identical field also of some of the thrilling exploits in buffalo-hunting and Indian-killing recorded by Captain Mayne Reid, Ned Buntline, and other veracious historians of the last ten or fifteen years? while, at the end of all, in the dim, hazy, magnificent distance, are those towering old Rocky Mountains wherein lies our goal — full of boundless possibilities for a bunch of youngsters hardly yet out of their "teens." Surely, life seems indeed well worth living as we start out on this glorious spring morning.

After a great breakfast we are ready for anything. We take the road at eight o'clock, having arranged that to-day's goal shall be a famous station some twenty-five miles ahead. We continue in a northwesterly course over the same monotonous rolling prairie, but through a still fairly well cultivated farming country, which would be vastly more pleasing to the eye if there were little groves of trees scattered here and there through it — for it's as bare as a ball-room floor. By ten o'clock we cross the Big Grasshopper, which seems to have been sufficient of an event to note down, although I don't believe our wagon-wheels sink over twelve inches in the water. At noon the westbound coach from Atchison this morning passes us, having as its single passenger Fraser of Central City, whom we left in the hotel yesterday, and we send him on his way with three cheers.

By two o'clock we reach Clear creek, and stop to water our stock, and to indulge in an improvised lunch. We are somewhat taken aback to discover that we have covered

only eleven miles of distance, although we have been six hours on the road, and moving steadily since the start. We are already beginning to understand something of the exasperating qualities of a road over a rolling prairie — up one hill and down another — up and down, only to climb again from every hollow; and we are fast losing confidence in the famous twenty-five-mile run which we were to make to-day: indeed, some one now wants to know "what twenty-five-mile run?" and declares this is the first time he has heard of it, and it is not many minutes before the entire camp, one by one, makes the same declaration — so I am obliged to admit that my pencil must have been at fault when I jotted down my hasty note early in the morning.

We take the road for a couple of miles more, and on reaching Kennekuk, we unanimously decide that it is a good camp-ground, and that thirteen miles anyway, under certain conditions, may be fairly called a good day's work — although to my ear there is something suspicious in the way this proposition is

reiterated, as though each one finds it a trifle difficult to convince himself of its truth. I am certain, however, that the stock are entirely satisfied to end the day here, by the way they roll on their backs over the prairie as soon as they are released from the harness; and I am equally sure that the two great "wheelers" of our mule team — old veterans of the Plains — fully appreciate our discomfiture, and quietly chuckle over it, judging by the cynical way in which they cock their ears at me as I lead them down to water at the creek, some two hundred yards away. To be more correct, perhaps I should rather say that I "accompany" them to the water. I walk between the two, with a halter-strap in each hand, and with a properly conciliating manner, for I am yet a stranger to mules and their ways, and it is evident they spot me for a tenderfoot. We have not proceeded far when, quick as a flash, each strap is tautened out straight, each arm nearly wrenched from its socket, and I am thrown off my feet and lying flat on my back on the prairie sod, gazing up at the sky,

with the two mules each pulling their hardest in opposite directions. How it all happened I don't know; that it was deliberately contrived between the two, I haven't the slightest doubt; but, having thus asserted themselves, they become tractable enough, and allow me to pick myself up, which I do shamefacedly, and we jog along amicably for the rest of the way.

This little town of Kennekuk, with its rustic inn and a house or two, is but a mail station, and lies on the eastern border of the "Kickapoo Reserve," a Government grant of something like three hundred square miles, on which live the Kickapoos, or what is left of them. The place gets its name from their old chief and prophet, who brought them here from Illinois, many years ago, and died soon after. That is what they tell us here. They are warriors no longer, but farmers now — several hundred of them settled here, fairly well civilized, and on good terms with their white neighbors of the little town close by. The Indian village is by no means made up of tepees or lodges: there are merely enough of

these to add a picturesque touch to the whole settlement, which exhibits many thrifty-looking dwellings of log or frame.

It is Sunday evening, we are all aweary, and the temptation to get a good supper under cover, and without the labor of cooking it, is too strong to be resisted; so we adjourn to the little inn, and feast on ham and eggs, hot biscuits, pies and hot coffee. This "roughing it" doesn't seem half as bad as they make it out. We turn into our wagons early, and sleep well — not so soundly, however, but that at some time during the night we hear rain falling, and with a steadiness which I fear bodes us no good.

MONDAY, *March 13th*, Third Day: We turn out as usual at six this morning, but, it must be confessed, not with alacrity. The voices of the night have been ominous, and we dread to meet the truth face to face, so we raise our canvas covers very gradually. The general look of dismay on all faces is something comical. What we see in a hasty glance

around is certainly anything but the "picnic" weather which we revelled in yesterday, and something very like "curses, not loud but deep," at the treacherous Kansas climate, rumble out from under the wagon-tops. The morning is dismal almost beyond conception. A heavy drizzle is steadily falling, and, worse luck, freezes as it falls, covering all things with a veneer of ice that will make teaming with our heavy loads both difficult and dangerous, and, as soon as it melts, will turn the roads into great channels of mud. It is useless to talk about travelling under these conditions; moreover, we have hardly got seasoned yet, and can't withstand the temptation of making ourselves comfortable as long as the means are ready at hand; so, after a short council, we agree very unanimously to lay by for to-day, and not even attempt to make camp-fire, but to move to the little country inn across the road, get our meals, and spend the day indoors, watching the falling rain, and snugly communing with our books and pipes — all of which we do to our great comfort.

TUESDAY, *March 14th*, Fourth Day: We leave our beds rather sullenly, as we know we can expect only another dismal morning — and so we find it, as we one by one drop out of the wagons. True, the rain has stopped falling, but the sky is still heavy with leaden clouds, while under foot there is nothing but mud! mud! mud! on every side. Still we shake ourselves together, and determine to try the road, as we feel somewhat ashamed of our weak yielding to the softer side of things yesterday. It needs but a very short experience, however, to show us this morning that the weather conditions are really against us, and that it would be but the sheerest folly to attempt to battle with them.

Once on the road, we find it more like a creek than anything else, with the water nearly a foot deep. We struggle along for a mile and a half, and reach Muddy creek by eleven o'clock. Its condition to-day certainly justifies its name; moreover, it is entirely too high to attempt to cross with safety, so we go at once into camp on its banks alongside the ford, and

make ourselves as comfortable as possible by a rousing camp-fire. A heavy, slow-moving ox train of eleven Government wagons, carrying stores from Fort Leavenworth to Fort Kearney, drives in near us, marking a one-half mile advance as its day's work. The day continues gloomy enough to the end; for some reason our cook can't get his stove to do its proper service, so we are obliged to content ourselves with a supper of dry bread and cold baked beans, which we eat standing around our camp-fire in six inches of mud. While this is no doubt good, healthy fare, the conditions are not conducive to hilarity, so we turn into our wagons very early, hoping to forget our troubles in sleep.

WEDNESDAY, *March 15th*, Fifth Day: It is still dismal, cold, and stormy-looking, but dry, and as the creek has fallen about four feet, we conclude to try the road. We make the ford safely, but our friend Eldridge, who had pulled up near us yesterday, is still unable to get over, as he is much heavier laden than we, and we are

compelled to leave him behind, which later on sets me to musing on the tremendous results that sometimes hinge upon trifles. We never saw poor Eldridge again — as I shall relate further on. We have hardly gone a mile beyond the ford when snow begins to fall, and we are soon facing a lively "north wester." The country is still a rolling prairie, with scarcely a stick of timber on it, and we get the full fury of the storm. We are obliged to continue, however, till we can get under the lee of some friendly bluff, and near some wood and water, and by five o'clock, the storm having gradually abated during the afternoon, or we having moved from out of its radius, we find comfortable shelter close by "Rising's," a mail station of great repute for its meals among coach travellers. We are pretty well done up by our day's drive of eleven and a half miles, so we again weakly seek the shelter of a house for our supper; we are naturally curious also to see for ourselves whether this house deserves its reputation — and when we return to our camp, we have unanimously decided that it does.

It was nearly a month later, and when we had got well out on the South Platte, that we heard again of Eldridge, and that I fell to pondering as I have related. Had Eldridge been able to ford the Muddy when we did, he would in all probability have continued with us through to the Mountains. As it was, after our pushing ahead he travelled alone with his driver as far as the Little Blue, about one hundred miles west from where we parted; and when in camp at this point, the fellow, to revenge some fancied grievance, crept up behind him, and knocked him on the head with an axe, left his body in the bushes by the river, and drove on with the team. News of the murder in some way sped along the road ahead of him, and a party of soldiers from Fort Kearney came east, and gathered in the wretch with his team and wagon, with very little trouble. At the fort he was at once court-martialed, and sentenced to death, but given his option of being shot or hung. He chose the former, saying that his grandmother had always predicted he would be hung, and

in order to make her out a liar, he wished to be shot. He showed a great deal of bravado — would not allow his eyes to be bandaged, folded his arms, and, kicking aside his coffin, which lay ready on the ground near him, shouted. "Fire away! I ain't one of your chicken-hearted!" and fell dead, with several ounces of lead added to his normal weight.

THURSDAY, *March 16th*, Sixth Day: Up as usual at six, and a bright and lovely morning. Supper at the house had been so good that we weakly yield to the seductiveness of its memory, and go over there for breakfast. This may not be the best way to get hardened to "Plains fare" — but we argue that, as we are still among the settlements, we might as well be comfortable while we can. Our fare will be plain enough a week or two hence, when we are out among the lonely sandhills and desolate reaches of the great Platte valley. We get an early start this morning. For the first time the hunters of the expedition find a use for their one shot-gun, and before noon

bring in a bag of prairie chickens — a kind of game which seems very plentiful and very tame hereabouts. By ten o'clock we pass through Grenada, a group of two or three houses, a couple of country stores, and a blacksmith shop — the only variation for miles, except for an occasional lone settler's cabin, from the everlasting monotony of rolling prairie, now showing less and less cultivation as we gradually put additional miles between our rear wagon and the River. I am inclined to think now that the distinguished poet I have quoted at the beginning sacrificed exactness to grace of expression — for the "rolls" of these prairies represent ocean's deepest and most expansive rather than his "gentlest" swell: the ups and downs of the prairie here being indeed almost like hill and vale.

We soon overtake an ox train of fifty wagons, from Leavenworth for Denver, noisy with its "whoa! haw!" all along the line, and plodding patiently on, well satisfied if it can add an average of ten miles to its credit at

the end of each day's tedious tramp. A mile beyond we pass a mule train of twenty-five or thirty wagons, westbound, encamped on the side of a creek, and temporarily laid up for repairs — several wagons already broken down (probably overloaded, as freights are enormously high this season, and the temptation is strong to crowd the wagons "up to the gunwales"). We stop here for our noon lunch. By four or five in the afternoon we reach a stage station of one house and a barn, rejoicing in the two titles of Log Chain and Union Springs, and go into camp. We are impatient to get our pot on the fire, as a stew of prairie hen is on the *menu* for supper.

Just below us, on the little creek, is a camp of seven wagons, with horse teams — quite an "express" train, like our own — carrying "Butterfield's Overland Despatch" freight, and like ourselves bound for Denver. There are seven men with it — one man to a wagon — and after supper we stroll over and make their acquaintance. Within an hour we are chumming together, singing by their camp-

fire, and exchanging experiences with as much freedom as though we had been friends for years. They are a jolly lot, and give us a cordial welcome. With one exception they are old Plainsmen. The two owners of the train, who are each driving, are "Doc" Rice and "Lije" Graves, and the party, who become our comrades for the greater part of our after journey, will be known among us as "Doc Rice's outfit."

It is a fortunate meeting for us. Our little caravan of two wagons, with its almost boyish escort, has rolled along well enough, even in bad weather, in the shelter of the settlements; but in another week, or sooner, we shall cross the real frontier, the "Little Blue," a name which was coupled with so many of the Indian stories of Atchison as to come to have a dread significance to us, and indeed to all pilgrims — and then it will behoove us to consider our strength (or our weakness), to brush up our fire-arms, look well to our stock morning and evening, and set double guards for the night; at least so they

warned us in town, and apparently with reason, and we have been more or less apprehensive on this score ever since. Now, however, that we can count nine wagons, which will certainly be more amenable to corral* formation (for defence of both selves and stock) than two — and in all fifteen men, we feel very much elated, and far less fearful of losing our scalps than we have been, although each has bravely succeeded in keeping his fears to himself thus far.

These new comrades of ours would not shine in a drawing-room, any of them. They are all, unanimously and emphatically, unkempt and dirty, and they show no special ambition to clean up on occasion (as we discover after-

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* "Corral" is from the Spanish, meaning literally a circular enclosure — although in practice the corral sometimes takes an elliptical form. It is made by running the wagons in line as close together as possible, one after another, the tongue of each being run under the one next in front of it, and an opening left at the most convenient point in the inclosure for ingress or exit. If in a hostile country, the stock are driven inside to prevent stampeding; and if an attack is feared, the spaces between the wagons are filled as far as possible with boxes, freight, or anything else available in the camp equipage that will help form a breastwork.

wards, when the Platte tempts our party to the luxury of baths now and then). They are of the Plains, "plainsy" — slouchy and careless; they live their lives beyond the frontier, for long intervals away from the haunts of men; their days of labor on the road mean all days when travel is possible, and the day for them begins with the dawn and lasts till the dusk: rounding up and feeding their stock in the morning, driving and pushing along all day in sun, and storm, and dirt; then looking after their cattle again as soon as camp is made, and before they can sit down to their own rough meal of milkless and sugarless coffee, butterless bread and bacon; perhaps indulging themselves in their single luxury of an hour by the camp-fire before they turn in (or roll themselves into blankets on the prairie where they lie) for the sleep that recruits them for the next day's same monotonous round; and so on for weeks and months before they reach a port, or see any more of human kind than others much like themselves whom they meet or pass on the road. And when they

discharge their freight at one end of the line, back they come for another, over the same road, and working their passage in the same way. Yet these fellows of ours are apparently as happy as the proverbial clam — jolly, free from care, ready, as soon as their cattle are fixed for tne night, for a friendly smoke by the camp-fire, and a string of good stories (and they are loaded with them), or for a dance if need be, and there is a fiddle handy, or for a good "sing" well into the night — for they have the voices, some of them, and sing well; and they seem to be as well satisfied with their vocation as you or I may be with ours. There is surely something in this free air of the prairies that attaches them to this careless, happy-go-lucky, rough, and often dangerous profession of theirs; and, as for the men themselves, we believe from the start that, while perhaps not of heroic mould, they are good men and true, and certain to prove staunch friends in emergency.

FRIDAY, *March 17th*, Seventh Day: A beautiful morning, made even more serene by a royal breakfast — roast prairie chicken, fried ham, bread and coffee, all so satisfying that no one kicks for lack of butter and milk. We pull into line with Rice's teams, and feel that we make a gallant show with all these wagons and their sturdy drivers, and with us half-dozen pedestrians trudging alongside, somewhat like a guard of honor, as there are a few fire-arms in evidence, and the bearers, with bold Dick Turpin in the van, make the most of them — at least until the novelty wears off, when they gradually disappear. We pass the first sign of a human habitation in the middle of the morning — a very dirty house alongside an equally dirty little gully. It is dignified by a name, however — Holes-in-the-Prairie — something we didn't need to be reminded of on this morning's march. We continue for eight more monotonous miles, when at about one o'clock we are astonished by seeing ahead of us what appears like a little toy church-spire peeping over the roll of

the prairie, then we "raise" a house or two, which soon develop into perhaps a score, with quite a sprinkling of young shade trees; a modest little schoolhouse also, three or four stores, and actually a two-story brick hotel — in fact (not omitting a sign indicating that somebody's beer is to be had within), here are all the beginnings of a pretty and thrifty-looking country town, which, considering our week's travel over an almost bare prairie, seems to us as though it had fallen out of the skies and come down right side up. It reminds us also, however, that we haven't as yet got so deeply into the wild West after all — and on putting this and that together, we find we are just sixty miles along on our journey.

And this is Seneca. We seem to feel it is but due to its venerable namesake that we should halt a while — for, though it is scarcely past noon, we at once pull up and go into camp without a word of discussion, and quite as though it had been tacitly understood. Whatever impels us, we remain for the balance of the day, amuse ourselves by strolling about

town for the afternoon, eat supper at the little hotel, and buy souvenirs of the place, in the shape of butter at a dollar a pound, and eggs at a ratably high figure per dozen, and these we offer the next morning at our camp-fire as a sacrifice to the shade of the sturdy old Roman, whose memory may even yet prove to have a more abiding monument in this thrifty little town on the frontier of the new world than in his fast crumbling tomb by the distant Appian Way. (These sage reflections are suggested by a member of our combined groups who affects the classics — not the only instance wherein I have found a bit of ancient lore hidden under the skin of a mulewhacker. At the same time, I am not at all certain that the Kansas settlers who christened the little town connected the name with anything more ancient than one of the Indian tribes of the "Five Nations," which moved West years ago from New York State.)

SATURDAY, *March 18th*, Eighth Day: A beautiful morning again, and, refreshed by our

long rest, we leave Seneca at shortly after seven o'clock. We turn once or twice for a "longing, lingering look behind," as this is to be positively the last appearance of any settlements on our route other than military posts, and we therefore feel we are now really pushing out to sea. The roads have been improving for a day or two, and give us little to complain of, except that they still persist in running up and down hill. Nine miles of barrenness bring us to Ash Point in the first three hours, which is very fair travelling. As we are not carrying the mails, we don't stop here for relays, which is Ash Point's only *raison d'etre.* By noon we have arrived at Frogtown, a title which is something of a shock after classic Seneca, until the antics of one of our mules remind us that this is Kansas — not Rome — and that we had better get down to practical matters; still I should not encumber my record with the note that Frogtown measures about one hundred feet square, and embraces in all two houses, one barn, and a pig-pen, were it not that the latter forces itself upon

one's attention, and protests in a moving way against being slighted. We stop for a lunch on the little creek near by, and are on the road again in a half-hour, and travel steadily and without incident or change of view until nearly six in the evening, when we make a beautiful camp in a fine strip of woods — on a creek, of course — a hundred yards or so from "Gitard's," a coach station of great repute for its table, which, however, we do not patronize, largely because Ed, who has, to our great satisfaction, acted as cook thus far, has been inspired to promise us a feast of slapjacks as a *bonne bouche* for supper.

Few if any of the uninitiated can appreciate how sweet is the music of such an announcement to the ears of hungry and tired pilgrims! Nor can they realize how serious is the engagement Ed has taken upon himself in voluntarily making such an offer. Still, he has already tested the eating capacities of his seven comrades; moreover, considering his service in the army, we are safe in assuming that he knows how to make the slapjack,

that crowning triumph of the Plains cook's art—delicately brown-skinned, yet well-conditioned and sound; light as a feather, and of the full circumference of the griddle. Served with a sauce in which is combined a Plains appetite with unlimited black molasses, it becomes the tidbit *par excellence* of the pilgrim's table. More than once since have I in my enthusiasm chewed the end of a pencil, waiting for the lines to come for an "Ode to the Slapjack"—but happily I never got beyond the title. I say "happily," because I am now convinced I never could have done justice to the subject; and after the delightful and satisfying experiences for which I am indebted to this noble product of the griddle, why should I maltreat it? Some former traveller along this trail has computed that in the first year of the Pike's Peak stampede (1859) there were enough slapjacks made and eaten on the Plains to pave the road the whole seven hundred miles from the River to the Mountains! From what we have already seen and heard about them, I don't think the estimate an extravagant one.

On this particular evening, after Ed has, with the deftness of long experience, tossed cake after cake in the air, and slipped them, beautifully browned, into the waiting tin plates, as they are time after time presented to him, until he has put into practice the formula, "8 times 4 are 32," and after we have shown our gratitude by turning in to help him clean up his kitchen, we all take our pipes and stroll over to Rice's camp, and we don't leave his fire until we have gone entirely through our combined repertoires of song — which means making the air ring for two hours at least — and when at last we roll ourselves into our buffaloes, we are, mentally and physically, about as completely happy as even youngsters ever succeed in being.

SUNDAY, *March 19th*, Ninth Day: It is a lovely morning, an ideal Sunday — but there is no Sabbath on the Plains, so we take the road as usual shortly after seven. In a mile's travel we reach the junction of two roads, one of which will cross the Big Blue at Marys-

ville, the other at Oketa, several miles north, and the two roads join again some thirty miles further on. The usual coach route is by Marysville, but at present there is some friction between the stage company and the Marysville people, and the coaches are temporarily diverted via Oketa. It behooves us to take the most travelled road, on several accounts, but Doc's men submit it to the toss of a penny, and Oketa wins any way. We get there by noon, after a total progress of ten miles since our start. This station is on the southern edge of the Otoe Reserve, on which the remnants of the tribe, now fairly civilized, are looked after by the Government, like the Kickapoos further east; and as we stop for a short rest and a trifle of lunch, chance favors us with a view of one of the braves, as he comes into the station on some peaceful mission. He is a magnificent fellow physically, standing certainly several inches over six feet, but as he is innocent of either paint or feathers, he appears very tame indeed.

We cross the Big Blue at the ford with

some difficulty but no damage, and are some what impressed with the fact that we have just completed our first one hundred miles west of the Missouri. We push on for five miles further, during which we cross the northern line of Kansas, and make an early camp on a little creek in Nebraska Territory. The indications in front of us are favorable for a much better looking country, and for a vastly more interesting road than what we have left on the other side of the river, which had lately become almost ghastly from the number of dead mules and oxen daily grinning at us here and there alongside, or their bleaching bones in fragments glistening in the sun, and seldom out of the range of view in a day's march — so much of one or other of these, at least, as to need no "blazing" of the trail, but to make the prospect at times inconceivably dreary and desolate.

A very strong wind ushers in the night, foreboding a storm, and before turning in, we notice prairie fires on three sides of us, the gale running the lines of fire briskly through

the old, dry and withered grass of last season, which stands from a few inches to several feet high in places — but none in range of our camp, and all too far distant to cause us any alarm, or to seduce us from the sound sleep which we know awaits us whenever we decide to turn in for the night.

MONDAY, *March, 20th*, Tenth Day: This morning the sky is heavy with clouds, and the outlook threatening — but we must get on, and it is advisable also that we make a pretty long stage to-day. The first station ahead is but eight miles distant, while the next is fourteen miles further on, and if we start on this second stage we shall be bound to complete it, in order to find wood and water, for lack of either of which our stock or ourselves would suffer. We make an early start, and travel in a spiritless way through the gloom for a couple of hours, when a light shower of rain falls, with a little mild thunder and lightning. We are happily too early in the season to encounter the latter in the violence they often display in

these prairie regions. By half-past eleven we make our first stage of eight miles, without having seen a habitation or met a human being. We spare only a half-hour for lunch, and at noon are on the road again, confident of covering the distance ahead of us, but (as we soon discover) with a very faint conception of how tremendous a length fourteen miles may appear when paced under the conditions that soon present themselves; for in an hour or so rain begins to fall, and soon settles into a steady pour; some one says it is the equinoctial, which may be true enough, but doesn't help matters a bit, for a strong March wind springs up, and falls into line with the rain, settling down to its work with the same steadiness, and with the same evident intention of exhausting the strength and patience of both ourselves and our animals, and forcing us to camp in some hollow of the bleak prairie road, which still continues its monotonous course up-hill and down, as it did on the other side of the Blue.

It is already evident that the fair stretch

of country which we yesterday saw before us in the distance lies much farther ahead than we supposed, and that we have still got to put behind us a long roll of this desolate, dreary, exasperating, lonely prairie, with its goblin-like telegraph poles and their single wires nodding to us in the strong wind, and without another vestige of man's handiwork or of human occupation, as we slowly count mile after mile during this gloomy afternoon. It needs less than an hour of this rain to turn the road into mud to a depth of fully eight or ten inches. We pedestrians seek shelter from the driving storm by tramping on the lee side of our wagons, and by so doing we soon become splashed and bedaubed with mud up to our knees. It is dreary work for even our sturdy mules of the big wagon, and by four in the afternoon, although they toil doggedly along, all the stock begin to show signs of exhaustion. As for ourselves, we are all too sullen and too much out of humor to attempt to talk. We have been for some while looking far ahead for the little black strip of timber

that will prove our goal, and that every traveller or train must reach for the night's camp, for timber means a creek, and a creek means water, and water denotes the station; but thus far there has been nothing in view from the top of one "roll" but the top of the next one, with the surly-looking leaden clouds almost resting on it. We calculate, however, that "the ranche" is now perhaps not more than three or four miles distant, and in my eagerness and anxiety to get there, I am unable to keep my pace down to the slow, toiling step of the animals; so I induce one of the boys to join me in pushing ahead of the caravan, to secure shelter for our stock and supper for our party when they shall arrive.

We go on in nervous haste, up and down, in the wind and rain and mud, and in an hour or more the station comes in sight at last. How snug and comfortable it looks — the house and the out-buildings, the corrals and the haycocks, all clustered about on the little creek, at the foot of one of the long "rolls." Never have I seen a more pleasant prospect,

in spite of the wet and the evening gloom; and the keeper — what a cheery, agreeable, hospitable fellow he is! "Supper? you bet! and a good one, all ready by the time your boys come up!" "The stock? plenty of room in the corral for the whole of them, and hay and grain galore! come in and dry yourselves by the wood fire!" We need no second invitation, and as we luxuriate in the cheerful blaze, we hug ourselves at the prospect of the other material comforts to come in the next half-hour: we can already hear the ham sizzling, and oh! how good that coffee does smell! Soon we note the tramp of our cattle, and the roll and rattle of the wagons, and we rush out to advise the boys of the good cheer awaiting them. The tired stock are first attended to, however, for they serve us faithfully, and they can't order their own comforts as we can. Then the boys, Rice's men and all, come rolling in, soaking wet and almost ready to drop with fatigue. We make way for them at the fire, but it is a few minutes only before our landlord enters to announce the

feast ready in the next room. Ye gods, what a spread! Surely never before was such coffee brewed, nor such delicious ham and eggs as sputtered on the dishes before us, which are brought in fresh from the fire, only to be at once emptied, and renewed again and yet again; and as for the hot biscuits and the pies, they are beyond description. The mulewhacking philosopher of Rice's outfit — he of the classic outburst at Seneca, and who came, by the way, from east of the Hudson river — is at times disposed to be frivolous: and now, with face beaming under the mellowing influence of the general good cheer, he suggests that if we lacked the constant visible evidence of his presence to testify to the fact of the New Englander being proudly in the van of this general westward advance beyond the old frontier, this regular appearance of pie at these ranche meals, regardless of the time of day or night, should absolutely settle the question; and he insists that the log of the expedition should take serious note of the fact, as a matter of historic interest.

We may never know such a trying, wearing, dismal, indescribably fatiguing day again, in the long journey yet before us, but it seems to us now, in the fullness of our satisfaction with these physical comforts, that it would be almost worth repeating, for the sake of again indulging in such refreshment with such keen enjoyment. There must have been perfect bliss in large measure stamped on our faces as we sat at that table, and I am sure the group with their surroundings would have formed a tempting subject for a painter. At the end of it all we have a good pull at our pipes, but we soon find we are too tired for a late sitting, and are glad enough to follow our host to the loft of his spacious log cabin, where some of our own party are supplied with little low cots, myself and another rolling ourselves in our buffaloes and blankets on the floor, and in a minute going off into sleep sweeter than ever we knew on hair mattresses or feather beds.

TUESDAY, *March 21st*, Eleventh Day: The storm is over. The morning is sunny

and beautiful, and the roads are drying fast, but after our march of yesterday we are bound to give our stock and ourselves a good rest. We breakfast in the station, and then proceed to give everything a thorough overhauling. Our still wet and muddy clothes are washed out at the creek, and dried in the sun; wagon-covers, wheels and harness scraped and washed down; all our baggage and provisions hauled out of the wagons, piece by piece, to be repacked and snugly stowed away again; and it is evening before this is all done to our satisfaction. We know it is time well spent, however, and that we shall feel the benefit of it as soon as we strike the road again. The stock, too, are having a famous resting spell, and will help us to roll up good round figures of daily miles until the next storm strikes us, as a return for our good treatment of them. Aside from any motives of humanity, this is the policy of wisdom, and we know that many a caravan has come to grief on this same highway because of man's brutality, or indifference, or short-sighted

avarice in this connection. The roadside is lined with the grim testimony.

This is a red-letter day in our Dick's calendar. One of Rice's drivers, a mere boy, on his first trip of the kind, has become sick — rumor says the symptoms are those of small-pox; whatever it is, he can't go on safely without medical treatment, and this is not to be had on the road ahead of us for perhaps many weeks, so his only practical course seems to be to turn about and go back to our starting point — one hundred and thirty miles, and afoot, unless some kind-hearted returning pilgrim overtakes him and gives him a lift. It seems very hard, but it's "the luck of the road." His leaving of course makes Rice short-handed, and he offers the place to Dick, who is quite set up at being the first one of our party to begin earning an income, and accepts gleefully, and with our consent and approval.

WEDNESDAY, *March 22d*, Twelfth Day: As I am the purser as well as the historian of

this expedition, I have a special chance to note, in settling with our landlord, that our luxurious fare and lodgment for a day and two nights here at Rock creek make quite a hole in our company treasury; but no one begrudges a penny of it, and we part from our host with mutual good wishes. The morning is beautiful, and we start out in great spirits, and bowl merrily along for ten miles without incident; but as this brings us to a ranche, and it is about noon, we stop an hour for rest and lunch; and while here, who should appear but a man travelling about the country with a wagon full of turnips to sell. Of course we patronize him, for fresh vegetables of any kind are always a most welcome addition to the pilgrim's larder; but all the while we regard the man with amazement, wondering where he could have dropped from, and where he expects to find other customers. All we learn is that he is a rancheman "from hereabouts" — and we see that he is offering to sell turnips. It is just one of those comical incidents of the prairies that one is likely to

meet with at any time, but that are few indeed compared to the serious or tragic happenings of the road. It is to us more ludicrous than can easily be realized, for, outside of ourselves and the people of the station, if there is now another human being of any sort or condition, whether likely to buy turnips or not, within ten miles of us, we certainly don't know it; and our purchase has returned the dealer just seventy five cents.

Three or four miles beyond, in our afternoon march, we reach and cross the Little Sandy river. It requires no great effort on our part, as it is hardly a dozen feet wide, and it may be as many inches deep, but no more. It is a clear and charming little stream, however, and runs laughing and chattering along in a way to delight our eyes and ears, which have encountered but shabby treatment thus far; but this little stream promises pleasanter things, and it is but a very few minutes before its promise is made good, for we suddenly come upon as pretty a panorama as one could wish to feast his eyes upon — to us it is

certainly delightful by contrast. It seems as though our road has abruptly come to the very edge of the rolling prairie, and it suddenly descends the face of the bluff thus formed into a valley considerably lower than the mean level of the prairie we have just left; but this valley is level country, and we can view it for many miles ahead of us, as we stop to do before descending. It is a pretty, grassy plateau, perhaps two or three miles wide, dotted at intervals with charming little groves of woodland, through which, like silver threads, run several of these pretty little streams they call "rivers" here; the whole flanked on either hand by a series of low bluffs. To our weary eyes it looks like a garden, and although it presents as yet no indications of human settlement, it must be that some day one will see here thriving farms and pleasant homesteads. In our intense delight at viewing this peaceful valley, soft and beautiful in the light of this sunny afternoon, we fail to remember just where we are geographically, and our pleasure is therefore

unmarred by the thought that in a day or two more, as we pass through it, we are bound to see where happy homes have indeed already been planted here, only to be transformed into crumbling, smoldering ruins: for one of these beautiful streams in the view ahead of us is the now famous "Little Blue," destined to be long connected in border history with stories of savage outrage, massacre and ruin.

We descend, and drive fully five miles through a charming bit of country to the stage station on the Big Sandy, which we reach at six o'clock, and we encamp in the road opposite the buildings. Doc Rice's men branched off to the right early in the afternoon, and are encamped a half-mile up stream. In the evening we all meet in the station, and make the rafters ring with song, much to the gratification and cheer of the keeper and his household (with whom we make friends, as usual). I am one of three whom he allows to sleep in the haymow, and we don't permit our comfort to be disturbed by any nervous fears regarding a very large prairie fire which we see some miles off in the south.

THURSDAY, *March 23d*, Thirteenth Day: It is a fine morning, and we break camp early, and in the course of a few miles overtake Rice's teams. The road soon leaves the Sandy, and stretches westward across the country for the Blue. It is pleasant travelling, however, and we put ten or eleven miles to our credit before we stop for lunch, which we do near a station whose name I have neglected to record. In the afternoon we notice a large prairie fire off in the southeast. One of Doc's men starts another fire to keep it company, by touching a match to the old grass alongside the road. The grass is like tinder, and if there is the slightest breeze blowing, you will have a glorious fire in two or three minutes, which in as many hours will spread across the prairie for miles.

We push on pleasantly, but without incident, until between four and five o'clock, when we reach the Little Blue ranche, on the bank of the famous and beautiful little stream. Here we camp for the night, near by the house. Ducks are plentiful, flying over

our heads in great flocks, and some of the hunters start out for them when we halt, but return empty-handed. There is but one fowling-piece in our arsenal, and although the boys labor diligently with their light Smith & Wesson rifles, the chance of bringing down the birds with single balls is always rather slim. The prairie hens that were so numerous and tame a week ago, we seem to have left behind us entirely.

FRIDAY, *March 24th*, Fourteenth Day: The morning is fine and tolerably cold, the water in our pails about the camp having frozen hard during the night. We break camp early, but before taking the road there has been a thorough round-up of all our stock of arms and ammunition, with the view of having it instantly available in case of need, and — as we are told is the common experience of Plainsmen — the most of it has been found at the bottoms of the wagons, under all the freight and baggage, and pulled out with some difficulty, so that we begin to ask each

other conundrums regarding our fortune had we been suddenly attacked before reaching this point. The idea is uppermost in our minds that we are now on the extreme frontier, and that to-day's march will plunge us into the enemy's country, if indeed we have not already entered it; and it behooves us, therefore, to prepare for as stout a defence as possible, if it should happen that we have to fight our way, although there is no real knowledge of any of the hostiles being now on the war-path, or that they will, in fact, be able to take it until grass grows, according to Indian parlance, "finger-high" — and this can hardly happen for a month hence.

Still there is such an all-pervading dread of the savages through this particular region, which suffered so much in the outbreaks of last summer and fall, that the pilgrim is constantly reminded of danger, and warned that it is the part of common prudence to be always on guard. We find also that Rice's men — seasoned and experienced on the road as they are — are quite as careful in this respect as

we are disposed to be; so that when we leave the station, at shortly after seven, it is with revolvers in all belts, and with guns of various kinds liberally carried by the party as a whole, or on the wagons in plain sight and within easy reach of those whose hands are for the time being employed with driving — and, altogether, we make a brave array: fourteen men, each of whom can at least pull a trigger, some of them to good purpose, and nine wagons with a score or more of animals, with which combined we can form an effective breastwork if attacked.

The road now follows the Little Blue river, which is at present an eighth of a mile away on our left, while the bluffs lie about twice that distance to our right, the intervening valley being generously dotted with pretty woods and thick shrubbery, yet open enough to give a wide range to the view over the grassy plateau, and to forbid any successful attempt at ambuscade or sudden surprise. The road itself is in fine condition, and the country so charming in its profusion of wild, natural

beauty, that we could again easily imagine ourselves out for a day's careless enjoyment, and we roll heedlessly along for a couple of hours, until we pass a stage station — a log house of such palpably new timbers as to arouse our curiosity, and when we are told that it has just been put up, to take the place of the original building on the same site, "which was burned during the Indian raid of last summer," we are at once recalled to the serious possibilities of our present position, as well as reminded of the tragic story attaching to this charming little valley.

Five miles further on, where we stop for our nooning, we meet two men, with a light wagon and a single team, eastbound from Denver, which they left on the 10th, just the day before we started out from Atchison: they have, therefore, travelled four hundred and eighty miles in about the time that it has taken us to make one hundred and seventy; but they have come over the western and best part of the road, the hard, natural highway of the Plains, empty, while we have had much of

vile roads, bad weather, and a heavy freight. They report all quiet along the line, as to the Indians, which relieves us somewhat, but they add that all along the Platte, west of Fort Kearney, the road is full of soldiers, who will probably give us more trouble than the savages, because of their lawless, thieving ways, and who are cordially hated by all pilgrims and Plainsmen. Well, all this sounds a little strange, but "we shall see what we shall see."

We start again at one, accomplish an easy ten-mile march, and by five o'clock make a camp of so curious and interesting a character as to be worth special description. The Indian raids of last year (1864), which began in August and continued for several months, embraced, first and last, an extent of Plains and prairie of fully four hundred and fifty miles in width, and of this the valley of the Little Blue formed the eastern border; while the station-house of the Little Blue ranche, which we quitted this morning, was the eastern-most habitation despoiled by the savages in their unprovoked and unlooked-for attack

on the white settlements, which in this valley reached almost the proportions of a general massacre. In course of weeks it became possible to distribute soldiers enough along this tremendous stretch of road to keep the overland stage and mail route open, and in certain places stockades were erected and good-sized garrisons were stationed for a considerable time. At this point where we end our day's march, among the woods at a short distance from the river, we have found one of these stockades of large proportions. It is fully two hundred feet long by one hundred and fifty feet wide, and nearly ten feet high, and is formed entirely of logs, driven upright in the ground, and as close together as they can be made to stand. Within this enclosure, on one side, is a row of nine log huts, for the soldiers' living quarters, and on the other side a long log stable for their horses. It is a strong work, and could easily be held by a small force of well-armed men against many times their number. It is now, and has been for several months, entirely deserted, and we

drive in without question, putting up our stock in the stables, and selecting for ourselves one of the huts, in which we find a big fire-place, and we soon proceed to get supper and make ourselves as comfortable as possible.

Our brave Dick Turpin's martial instincts are aroused by the sight and occupation of this military post, and he insists that, with all our stock and belongings in this enclosure, it is necessary that the entrance should be guarded in proper style by a sentry; and as he volunteers himself for the service, no one objects, and presently he is seen, with a rifle over his shoulder, pacing back and forth with an air of great importance. The novelty wears off after an hour or two, however, and our sentry slips into bed without waiting to be relieved. Some of the boys form a euchre party, and play for a while, but gradually the entire camp gets to sleep at about the usual hour. As for myself, the place and its story exercise a strange fascination over me. The story, in all its harrowing details, we had heard in Atchison, and again at last night's camp at

Little Blue ranche, and indeed here and there along the road, and now that we are on the very ground itself, I can't resist the impulse to steal out into the night and roam about the stockade, in the endeavor to construct a more realistic mental picture of the stricken valley and the fate that overtook its people.

It is only a few hundred yards down the road that we passed the ruins of the Ewbanks place: there were five in the family, all massacred together, from the father of sixty down, and the torch applied to their home. Here, on the other side, at perhaps the same distance, their neighbors, the Roper family, met the same fate, excepting as to the women, who were reserved for a captivity from which death would have been a merciful release. This very stockade itself marks the site of a ruined home, and emphasizes a tale of Indian butchery: I believe it to be Liberty Farm, the old home of the refugees whom we met, and whose bitterly graphic story we heard, in the little Atchison hotel. Within several miles of here, on all sides, every family in the valley —

peaceful farmers all — was either annihilated or forced to flee in one or other of those bloody days of last summer. In our entire march this afternoon, in which we covered ten miles, we met not one human being, nor one sign of human occupation; and yet a short eight months ago here were all the beginnings of a prosperous little farming community of men, women and children. Call it fantastic, or what you will — but to me, in the gloom of these woods, made even more palpable by the sickly light of the last ragged fragment of a waning moon, the whole atmosphere of the night seems surcharged with the melancholy story; and one can even fancy the little prattling river as joining with the mournful sough of the night wind through the rustling trees in a general dirge over the desolated firesides. There is anyhow something uncanny about the place, and by contrast the single candle-light seems cheerful in the little hut where my "bunkie" has laid out our buffaloes and blankets — and I am glad to return to it.

SATURDAY, *March 25th*, Fifteenth Day: The morning is cloudy and doubtful looking. We drive out of the stockade early, in advance of Rice's men, and travel at a good rate, as the road is in fine condition. It still follows the general course of the Little Blue, which is a beautifully clear little stream, from twenty to fifty feet wide, with well-wooded banks, and full of picturesque crooks and turns, so that we are sometimes on the very banks, and again a mile from it. We cover nine miles by half-past ten, to the next stage station, but do not stop. A mile beyond this we pass the wreckage of another home, destroyed by the Indians. (I note only such ruins as are close by the road itself.) Two or three miles further on, Doc's train overtakes us, and we stop for lunch. In the afternoon we make a drive of but six miles, and between three and four o'clock we end an uneventful but pleasant day's journey through a charming bit of country, by reaching Pawnee ranche.

This is one of the landmarks of last year's raid. The buildings are enclosed by a

log stockade, built by the soldiers whose fort we occupied last night, and here a small garrison withstood a sharp attack by the Reds, who after a brief fight drew off under the impression that it was defended by a much larger force. These Indian warriors seem under certain conditions to have been not half as brave as they are cracked up to be. Had they known that the rancheman of Pawnee had but a scant half-dozen men to support him in defending the place and the two or three women in it, it is probable their several score of gaudily-dressed braves might have nobly stood up to the scratch and wiped them out, as they did the defenceless farmers and their women and children farther down the river. One of Rice's men, now with us, was within the stockade at the time, and tells us the story.

The keeper's name is "Newt." I regret to have forgotten his surname, for he deserves to be recorded as a frontier hero, and I would like to do him honor. His age is somewhere between thirty and thirty-five — a slender, wiry,

quiet-mannered American, with the bronze of the prairies on his cheek. He tells us a part of the story of the fight himself, but in a most unassuming, modest way. By his stubborn defence he forced the savages to beat a retreat, but, watching them through the rifle-holes of his stockade, he discovered them, as they moved off, wantonly spearing his cattle. "That," he says in a quiet way, "made me mad." Mounting a horse, he rode alone outside his fort, stood off for a long time an attack of the stragglers of the savage band, and finally brought his stock safely inside, in defiance of them. That was courage, pure and simple. No inspiration from martial music — nor from comrades standing with him, shoulder to shoulder: none there to see, and admire, and cheer, except, indeed, the three or four men behind the stockade, who helped cover him by a shot now and then through the rifle-holes. It was just clean, clear grit.

This evening we are treated to a beautiful sight. Down the road, eastward from the ranche-house but on the right hand and parallel

with it, at a distance of two hundred yards or so, the ground is rather rolling and hilly — bluffs or ridges, as they call them here. Along the top of this ridge, the prairie grass is on fire in several parallel lines, and burning finely for the length of a mile or more, perhaps. The grass is low, and the fire is mostly along its edges, close to the ground. It has much the same effect as the lines of street and store gas-lights, looking down a long city street. One of these lines of fire, we hear at the ranche, was started some few miles below here, early in the evening, by one of the stage-drivers, as he said, "to light his way up."

SUNDAY, *March 26th*, Sixteenth Day: As we turn out this morning, the rain is pouring down in good earnest, and as if it means to make a day of it. We have been camped outside the stockade, but as it only needs a glance at the weather to know that we sha'n't be able to move to-day, we pick up our provisions and cooking traps, move inside, and take our breakfast in the pilgrims' room. I

ought to have explained long ago that on this overland road, any one travelling afoot, or horseback, or by mule team or ox team, or in any other possible way so long as it is not by coach, is called a "pilgrim." These coach stations, which are located ten to fifteen miles apart along the whole length of the road, are all intended to furnish and provide for the necessary relays of horses or mules belonging to the stage line, and are, of course, well supplied with stabling facilities, feed, etc., while at certain intervals some of them, of slightly greater pretensions, are also fitted up as eating stations for the coach passengers. In many cases like the present, the station is located on a thriving ranche, whose proprietor is also the station keeper. It is customary at all these larger stations to set apart a room in the house, or a little log cabin alongside, called the "pilgrims' room," and furnished with a cook-stove, for the free use of the pilgrims or Plainsmen who may be weather-bound — the pilgrim being expected to patronize the rancheman's stables and grain for sheltering

and feeding his stock. In the present case we have snug quarters, but it's very dull work trying to pass the Sabbath (!) indoors, with the rain falling steadily and drearily all day. Our experience on the road thus far, however, has been to little purpose if it hasn't taught us the lesson of patience.

Late this afternoon four teams, bound west, arrived and encamped on the creek, a few hundred yards above the ranche. Aside from the rain, this has been the only event of the day.

MONDAY, *March 27th*, Seventeenth Day: This day seems to be the one perfect blank in my record. We do absolutely nothing except to observe the weather, which, though the rain has ceased, is still very threatening, and the storm has left the roads in such bad condition that we are forced to remain at Pawnee and worry through the time as best we can with our cards, books and pipes, and a gossip now and then with our host of the ranche.

It is astonishing how much we have been

able to lighten the way thus far, and what cheer we have added to the camp-fire, by the musical resources of our combined parties — Rice's and our own. Nearly every one can sing, while we can count at least a quartette of really fine natural voices, which have had more or less training. And as for our repertoires, there is scarcely a song of the day that some one of us does not know — and this means that in a day or two after a new one is introduced, it becomes equally familiar to all. We sing all the sweet old plantation melodies, from "Nellie Bly" to "Uncle Ned"; all the sentimental ditties, "Hazel Dell," "Annie Lisle," "Fairy Belle," and twenty others; all the War ballads and songs, from "John Brown" to "Nicodemus."

Norman furnishes a number of swinging sea "chanties," and Rice's men contribute some quaint songs of the road. It is intensely funny to notice and listen to one of these weather-tanned drivers, with a face as expressionless as a disk of wrinkled brown leather, crooning "Co-lissee, co-lee, co-li, co-lo, co-lan,"

and drawling out a long chant about "Old John Ann" who's "a little old man," as he walks alongside his wagon, filling in the intervals by flicking lightly the flanks of his mules with his long black-snake, and "damning" their eyes and hearts in the most serious way, often without a trace of passion.

We begin of an evening in the middle of the collection, or just as the humor may seize one, without formality or ceremony, and I have not yet undertaken to count how many have appeared on the programme by the time we break up for the night. There is a refrain to one of Norman's that is sung to the air of "Camptown Races," and seems somehow to fit the road, and to be sung and hummed on all occasions, marching or resting, more than any other:

"Then blow, boys, blow,
For Cal-i-forny, oh!
There's plenty of gold in the mines, I'm told,
On the banks of Sac-ra-mento."

TUESDAY, *March 28th*, Eighteenth Day:

The morning, to our great delight, is rather pleasant, and the roads somewhat improved, so we turn out at five o'clock, bent upon making a long drive, our goal to-day being twenty-six miles distant. By seven o'clock we are on the road. We have to leave the pretty little river here, and make a dash of about fifty miles northwest "across lots" to reach the Platte — and this will take us among the hated rolling prairies again, or over a country much broken up by ravine and arroyo, but we hope to span it in two quick drives. We are but a little way out when we overtake the four teams which arrived at Pawnee on Sunday: we seem to beat almost everything on the road when we have a chance to try our speed. This gives us for the time thirteen wagons and eighteen men — a train which seems to us quite imposing in its proportions, and we are much impressed with a sense of our defensive strength, only to have our confidence somewhat shattered when at noon, about twelve miles out, we reach a ravine called Indian Hollow, from its being the site of the first

attack made by the Indians in last summer's raid. Just beyond the ravine, a short distance to the right of the road, is a mound whose character would be unmistakable, even without the headboard, which bears this inscription:

"In memory of
Smith, D. Kloppenberg and others,
of Smith's train, St. Joseph, Mo.,
Murdered by the Indians
Sunday, August 7th, 1864."

Here were butchered the greater part of a whole train fully as strong as is ours to-day, surprised perhaps at daybreak, when the men were in the poorest condition for defence — some at a distance watering the stock, others preparing breakfast, all more or less scattered, and their arms not available at the moment. This is the favorite time with the noble savage for springing his surprise on the wagon train — so they tell us along the road.

Our thoughts take a rather more serious turn after looking on this testimonial to Indian deviltry. We push on quietly for a couple of miles, and stop for lunch near a nameless

station. During the afternoon we make equally good time over a bare country, and by five o'clock accomplish our intended day's drive when we reach Muddy station, a little, low log cabin and a stable, lying in a dreary ravine, where we find a half-dozen eastbound wagons encamped; and here we put up for the night, turning in rather early, but not until we have visited the camp-fire of our neighbors, and indulged in a "sing" — which seems necessary to offset the general dreariness. The only other thing visible here outside the two miserable buildings is a lonesome grave, with its little rough headboard:

"In memory of William Scott,
Killed by Indians, November 4th, 1864."

We shall need no urging to pull out of here in the morning — early.

WEDNESDAY, *March 29th*, Nineteenth Day: It is rather cold but pleasant this morning as we break camp for the last time among the rolling prairies. We are in good spirits over the fact that only a moderate day's drive is

necessary to bring us to-night to the great overland highway, with our faces turned at last in the right direction, and perhaps to find plenty of company to start with on the last but really the chief section of our pilgrimage. A monotonous drive of eight miles brings us to the "sand-hills of the Platte," and in another mile we have crossed them, but not until we have had from their top a view of the great valley which we have been for so many days looking forward to.

The river itself is about five miles distant from where we stand, and we see perhaps eight or ten miles of its length on its east and west course at right angles to our road; that is, we think we see it: we certainly see the long, thin line of timber which is said to border its banks — what we view besides that is a broad, hazy line which furnishes a sort of quivering background to the trees, and on certain parts of which, by a palpable mirage, the trees are raised above the horizon and stand out in relief, though not inverted. However delusive the picture may be, on this

uncertain canvas, we are glad enough to know that somewhere in that line of haze, beyond a doubt, runs the strange river, famed in Indian song and trapper story — the broad, shallow, capricious Platte, that carries the melted snows of the great continental divide a thousand miles to help swell the volume of the "Big Muddy," and yet, vexed by its ever-shifting sands and changing channels, will often refuse safe transport for even a mile of its sinuous course to the smallest canoe. The *voyageurs* of the Northern fur companies of twenty and thirty years ago would sometimes, indeed, at certain stages of high water, be able to float down their season's product of furs and skins on rafts or scows, all the way from Fort Laramie to the Missouri, and thence to St. Louis, but even they frequently met with disaster before they reached the forks of the Platte; and the Plainsmen tell us that, though the experiment has been several times tried by Pike's-Peakers to return East from Denver by small boat or skiff, it has invariably failed, and usually the mariners have come to grief in the first hundred miles.

We take the road along the bottoms, with the bluffs a mile away on the left, and the river perhaps four miles on our right, but as we push westward this interval becomes gradually narrowed down until in a matter of twenty miles the road is said to run directly along the river-bank. A drive of eight miles over a plain of sage-brush and buffalo-grass brings us to Dogtown, with its half-dozen wretched adobe shacks above ground, and its thousands of underground strongholds of the little prairie-dog (about the size of a chipmunk), whose sentries pass the word along until at last half the population come out to view and gossip about us as we stop for lunch. We have a good chance here to verify the old Plains story of the queer underground families of these prairie-dog towns — the story persisted in by the Plainsmen, and as persistently disputed by the naturalists, of the dog, the owl, and the rattlesnake engaging in a sort of cooperative housekeeping. It is suggested that the owl stands guard, and the rattlesnake does any fighting that may be necessary, while

the dog keeps the larder supplied by foraging. The rattlesnake, indeed, is charged with forcing himself into the family group; but, however they arrange it, the three are here together, at some of the holes at least, and, with all deference to the scientific people, one must believe the evidence of his eyes.

After a short rest we push on, and at five o'clock pass through Fort Kearney, and a half-hour later reach Kearney City, or "Dobytown," so nicknamed because of its houses being all built of adobe or sod, cut from the prairie. Here we drive into a large "doby" corral, where we find about twenty wagons encamped, and thus finish the first stage of our journey, in which we have put two hundred and fifty miles behind us, while travelling at will. We have now driven into a military camp, and cannot start on our next stage without permission of the authorities.

This Kearney City is two miles west of Fort Kearney, and is mainly composed of boarding-houses and quarters for the officers stationed at the Fort. We have had so much

of unaccustomed salt pork in our diet that the boys commission me and another to see what can be done for the party among these boarding-houses in the way of supper, as we would thus stand a fair chance of a bite of fresh meat, and other desirable variations from our camp fare. After a careful survey in the dusk of the evening, we select a likely-looking adobe. The mistress herself comes to the door, which opens directly into the general sitting-room, and in the sudden glare of the light we see a confused jumble of gold braid and tassels and blue coats and gilt buttons. The wearers crowd the room — apparently awaiting supper — and glare at us with supercilious curiosity as we stand in the doorway. I ask for supper for the party — I had in fact a speech all ready beforehand, in which I had meant to stipulate for fresh meat and possibly other extras, with all the assurance of one who is able to pay for what he orders — but now I am so much abashed by this gorgeous display of commissioned majesty that my demand fades off into a rambling, abject appeal, which,

combined with our appearance (which we have not thought of, though no doubt we look much like "weary Willies"), seems to settle our case with the landlady, who had begun indeed by saying that she would give us the same supper as she had prepared for her boarders; but as I go on from bad to worse, she looks us over suspiciously from head to foot, and abruptly concludes by saying she "would rather not have us at all," and she politely assists me in shutting the door — leaving myself and comrade on the outside of it. We move off in deep humiliation, buy a loaf or two of bread as we pass a little "doby" bake-shop, and return sadly to camp.

III.

THE GREAT PLAINS.

* * * * "I think I hear
The sound of that advancing multitude
Which soon shall fill these deserts."

III.

From Fort Kearney to Denver.

FORT KEARNEY is to-day (1865) without doubt the most important point in all this vast country north of the Arkansas, and between the Missouri river and the Rocky Mountains. It is the general military headquarters, and not only exercises autocratic sway over other and smaller posts which dot the Plains at intervals of a hundred miles or less along the Platte, but it practically has under its care the safety from Indian attack of at least a thousand miles of highway. As already noted, there are necessary relay stations every ten or fifteen miles, for the maintenance of the coach service, which carries the overland mails, express and passengers, and at these, we are told, are stationed detachments of all

sizes, from a corporal's guard up; but of even greater importance than these is the matter of keeping the road open for the passage of the great wagon trains, whose freight is largely provisions and supplies, as upon these are absolutely dependent for their very existence the tens of thousands of mining people in Colorado and the country to the north and west of it, who are for the most part as yet purely consumers.

The Fort's location may be said to be at the real beginning of the great overland thoroughfare. It is true there is here the continuation of a highway which leaves the Missouri at Plattsmouth, two hundred miles east as tne bird flies, but so there are other roads starting westward from the River at various points, of which ours from Atchison is the chief (in fact, our road is popularly looked upon as the first section of the main thoroughfare), and it is not until these one by one become merged that the highway can in reality be called the great "Oregon Trail," as Parkman has it — and the last of these

junctions is the one we have just made, a few miles east of Kearney. It is at Kearney, also, that you really begin to enter upon the true "Plains," the vast plateau which measures a good four hundred miles in width from here to the base of the Rocky Mountains, and in that distance makes a gradual ascent of upwards of three thousand feet.

It is an historic road, this great highway, and although, in its use as a general thoroughfare, it cannot boast the age of the famous Santa Fe trail to the south, which as much as forty years ago marked the route of the great annual Spanish caravans from California and Mexico to "the States," it has for the last twenty years been really a more active and important factor in the work of taming the wilderness west of the Missouri, while there has been woven around it fully as great a wealth of story and tradition, romantic, tragic and dramatic, which, could it be gathered within ordinary compass, would make fascinating reading — but in this respect it has had fewer historians.

Its course was traced and recorded very early in the century by both Captains Pike and Long; and these were followed at intervals by others of lesser note, until in 1832 Captain Bonneville led his caravan over it. In 1836 brave Marcus Whitman added a unique page to its story when, with his little party of a half-dozen — two of them delicate women — he drove his historic wagon out from the River, and travelled for a month or more, without escort, before he overtook the American Fur Company's train which had started in advance of him. He journeyed with them to their destination — Fort Hall, on the Snake — and again struck out alone, for his little company were bound to Oregon; and in spite of the fact that he was told he was courting certain disaster, he finally landed wagon and party on the far-off Columbia river. This Whitman was the same resolute and fearless missionary who a few years later (1842) "saved Oregon to the Union" by his amazing winter journey of four thousand miles to the national capital — a journey in some of its

features without parallel in Plains history;* and his service was a spontaneous act of splendid patriotism of which we have not even yet come to realize the full value. Read his story, and you will see why I have called his wagon "historic."

There was some pioneer immigration to Oregon in a small way in 1843, and Whitman was in it and of it; but aside from this, it was not until after Fremont, on his return from his first expedition of 1842-3, published his voluminous report and detailed charts that the old Indian trail really came into use as a great trans-continental highway, or was familiarly known to any larger body of travellers than an occasional band of hunters or trappers, or a detached troop of Government cavalry, or "dragoons," as they used to be called.

By 1846, perhaps, the annual caravans of Oregon-bound emigrants began their great westward movement over it, which was continued for many years. Fort Kearney was

* See Alice Wellington Rollins' poem, "Whitman's Ride," in Cassell's "Representative Poems of Living Poets."

established in 1847, for the protection of the road, and soon after came the great Mormon emigration from Illinois; then the "Forty-niners" of California; again, at intervals, the Mormons; and then the "Pike's-Peakers" of 1858-9. These were chief among the great migrations, during which it would not be extravagant to say that there were often as many as six, or eight, or ten thousand wagons at a time moving on the road between the Mountains and the River; and these vast movements, marking as they did certain distinct steps toward the development of this great trans-Missouri region, were attended with such displays of hardy pioneering and splendid courage as certainly never were exhibited in greater degree in the opening to settlement of any other section of North America.

THURSDAY, *March 30th*, Twentieth Day: As we came on from the junction yesterday afternoon, we pushed through to our camp here without fairly realizing that we passed

the Fort or came through its grounds on the way — although the day's journal records the fact. We saw no ramparts, nor parapets, nor the frowning walls of a fortress, such as we have known on the Eastern sea-coast, with cannon poking their throats out on all sides; and it strikes us as very odd to be told that this rather large enclosed space on the plain, of the shape of a parallelogram, whose lines are marked partly by adobe houses and huts of various sizes, and partly by a log stockade — that this is the fort itself. It certainly does not at first sight convey the idea of security, or appear like a place of refuge such as one associates in the mind with a "fort" — although the sight of "Old Glory" flying from the top of a tall flagstaff in the centre of the enclosure is singularly cheering and welcome amid the desolation of this vast plain.

We are told that no trains are allowed to leave Kearney, westbound, with less than one hundred wagons or a like number of armed men. This is a new rule, and has

been put in force because of there having been extensive and disastrous Indian raids along the river as recently as last month, and which (being very unusual because occurring in snow time) are taken to indicate that others may be expected at any time, in season or out of season. All trains, therefore, arriving from the East, are held here at Kearney City until the requisite number of wagons or men accumulate. As we found but a score of wagons gathered in the big corral on our arrival last night, and we have only our own small party to add to them (Rice's men having been left behind a day or two ago because of lamed horses), the prospect of our early advance is not at all encouraging this morning; at least it seems so as we discuss it at breakfast within these odd-looking adobe walls, whose roof is the sky; but we have scarcely finished when along comes a mounted orderly from the Fort to announce that a small Government train will start within an hour with supplies for Fort McPherson, at Cottonwood Springs, and that we can fall into line

with it, and go on our way. This is good news, indeed; and we soon find ourselves making part of a caravan of twenty-eight wagons and thirty-five men, escorted by a troop of sixteen cavalrymen, who divide up and ride out on the flanks, or push on in advance whenever the road approaches dangerously near the bluffs. We are quite impressed with a sense of our importance as we see these blue uniforms of Uncle Sam in the saddle, and inspect admiringly the half-dozen big, substantial Government wagons in the van. Poor Dick Turpin! he will be broken-hearted when he gets our version of this (with embellishments), to think he couldn't have been "in it."

The day is beautiful, and the road fine and hard, but the drive uninteresting until noon, when we reach Twelve-and-a-half-Mile Point (the distance being reckoned from Kearney), where the road at last joins the river, which is here about a half-mile wide, and varies in depth from one to three feet. It is pleasant to look upon, and, if of no

other value, it at least gives us the comforting assurance that we shall never be short of water for the rest of our journey. Pushing on about five miles further along the river-bank, the Government wagons fall out of the line at Seventeen-Mile Point, and make camp early in the afternoon, and we, as in duty bound, follow their example. The blue-coats lariat their horses here and there, and roll themselves up in their blankets wherever they can find soft spots on the plain. In this way some of them get near our wagons, and we come to a closer acquaintance with them, and this, I must say, does not impress us very strongly with their individual fighting capacities, as they are almost boys, and apparently almost raw recruits. Still we know that in these points they don't fairly represent the Plains "regulars," who have done and are doing noble work in the Indian campaigns. It just happens that our especial escort, perhaps, has been drawn from some of the new levies; and as Uncle Sam's uniform alone means a great deal in the eyes of the

noble red man, we are not troubled with any fears on the latter's account on this stage of our journey. Taken altogether, train men and soldiers, we make rather a formidable showing, and the gentle savage is always very careful to count heads and compare forces before venturing very far on the war-path against the white man. That, at least, is the opinion of men who ought to know.

FRIDAY, *March 31st*, Twenty-first Day: We leave camp by seven o'clock, and the morning is fine, though cold. The road continues close along the river, with the sand-bluffs on our left, perhaps a mile away, the intervening plain beginning to show a slight touch of spring in the very faint green that is pushing up around the dusty old sage-brush and the weedy buffalo-grass that we have always with us. Across the river there is a similar width of plain, bounded by similar sand-hills; sometimes the plain will widen out to several miles, but it is invariably bordered by these bluffs. If we should turn about at

angles to our road, and cross these bluffs, I presume we would find another belt of plain and sand-hills. What ever created the latter will always be a mystery to me, and the more so because, as I hear, we shall find further on that, for intervals at least, the bluffs disappear, and there is one great, noble expanse of plain, bounded, like the sea, only by the sky.

Indian signs multiply. We don't need the testimony of the many skeletons of mule or ox, along the roadside — not those with which we have become so familiar, that have dropped from exhaustion and been left to slowly die, and with which the road has been lined for many days, but those with the tell-tale bits of harness, with a wagon-wheel, or a piece of a canvas wagon-cover near, which indicates that animals and wagon perished together, in some sudden onslaught of the savages: we see all these now, but it is still something else that we look for and find, and, indeed, have had thrust upon our sight only too often ever since our camp on the Little Blue, and nothing could be more significant.

It is the little raised mound, with a bit of board torn from a candle-box or some case of canned goods, perhaps, on which some survivor of the ruined ranche or the wrecked wagon train has recorded the sadly pathetic story — a simple list of the victims, with such data as may lead to their identification by-and-by, when the Reds are driven off the Plains.

We have not gone three miles of to-day's march before we pass a recent grave, a little way off on the left of the road, with a small headboard, scarce a foot high, and an inscription in pencil which is almost illegible already, although it can hardly be six months old. It tells, however, the story of massacre of an entire family: the inscription indicates that five or six persons lie buried beneath, though I cannot make out their names; and on this great, desolate plain, with only the silently-moving river alongside, the dreary sage-brush all around, and no sign of life or of human sympathy except the wagon train such as ours, which comes out of the equally desolate east-

ern horizon, like a ship out of the lonely waters of the deep, is visible for a few hours as it slowly toils along the roadway, and disappears again in the west, with scarcely a glance sidewise at this lonely place of sepulture — what could be sadder?

A few miles beyond, on the other side of the road, is another — "Joseph Berry, from Savannah, Mo., shot Nov. 28th, 1864;" and there are, no doubt, many others like him, sleeping their last sleep alongside the road here, but in unmarked graves — many whose pitiful fate will only be guessed at by the families or friends they have left behind them on the other side of the big River; for we pass during the day several wrecked and burned ranche-houses in our eighteen-mile drive, and broken and burned freight scattered along the road through every mile of it. If ours were a military column, after hostile Indians, they might say the trail along here was getting fairly "hot."

By one o'clock we make an early camp about a half-mile beyond the station of Plum creek,

thirty-five miles west of Fort Kearney. Quite a large garrison of soldiers is kept here, for the patrol of this particular section of the road, which for some reason is considered especially liable to Indian attack. It was here that the savages opened the ball in last summer's raid on the Platte, and their work is commemorated in the big mound just one mile east of the station, which covers the bodies of the victims of what has become known in Plains Indian history as "the massacre of Plum creek." One headboard at one end of the mound carries this record:

> "Here lie the bodies of eleven men, murdered by the Indians, August 8th, 1864, from Council Bluffs, Iowa, and St. Joseph, Mo."

This was the first train attacked west of Kearney last summer — surprised in the early morning, when the camp was just beginning to bestir itself, but when necessarily the men were scattered, and when in fact they had no reason to expect an Indian raid: it was the very beginning of the outbreak, when the

savages hit the Little Blue and the Platte simultaneously. The Little Blue, over one hundred miles east of here, was laid waste on August 7th, just one day before this.

We make such an early camp, and so near to the river, on this bright, sunny afternoon, that we can't resist the tempting chance of a bath, and we have a glorious revel in the cool water, though we can't anywhere wade in above waist-deep; still even so we are obliged to have a care, because of the treacherous quicksand bottom, which may suck one into its unknown depths at any minute. Our early camps of the last few days have been productive of other results also — they have allowed Rice's party to catch up with us, and this afternoon, as their canvas-covers come in sight, edging up over the eastern plain, we go out to meet them, give them a glorious welcome, and in the evening celebrate the event by a great "sing" by their camp-fire.

SATURDAY, *April 1st*, Twenty-second Day: This journal says, "a lovely morning." But

who shall describe the beauty of a fine morning on the Plains? Grant them to be as desolate and dreary as they are, in many respects, yet there is an exhilaration in the air at sunrise, and for an hour or two thereafter, that is absolutely beyond description. It is certain at least that I shall never be able to convey any adequate sense of the uplifting, buoyant qualities of the air that cause one, on unrolling himself from his blanket, and standing erect to greet the sun as he moves up majestically from the eastern horizon, to want to dance and sing, to turn a hand-spring, or do any other act which might by itself appear absurd, to testify to the exuberance of his spirits, and to the joy of living.

The camp is astir betimes this beautiful April morning. Kriss, the cook of Rice's party, is already at work on his breakfast, though it is but a little after five, when Keith, one of Doc's men, who is fat and inclined to be waggish, slides up to him and whispers something in his ear which causes a broad grin to break out over Kriss's face, then slips

quietly into Doc's tent, and with an air of great mystery picks out his rifle from the stack of firearms in one corner, and starts to go out without a word. Graves, who hasn't turned out yet, challenges him to tell what it's all about? "Be quiet," says Keith, "but get your rifle quick — there's a herd of buffalo over in the bluffs!" Graves is out in a twinkling. "They'll get among the stock, and stampede the whole outfit," he says, and then goes off in a burst of picturesque profanity such as we had no idea he was capable of.

The word has gone through the camp quicker than a fire through the prairie grass, and a half-dozen men, each with some kind of a shooting-iron, are heading for the sand-hills, which are about a mile away. They have run perhaps fifty yards before it occurs to any of them to take a squint at the bluffs, which seem as quiet and lifeless as usual, or to ask one another what part of the hills the game is in, when from the vicinity of the cook's fire some one shouts, "April fool!" and then it's a race back to see who shall get rid of his gun

unseen, and without being roasted by the entire camp.

When we take the road, we find our troop of cavalry reduced to six men, but, being under military rule, it is "ours not to reason why." During the morning we meet a train of fifty wagons, bound east, which is quite an event, as the road has been rather a lonesome one lately. They report everything quiet on the western end. By one o'clock we reach Pat Mullaly's ranche, which gives us sixteen miles for our morning drive. Hard by is another of those gruesome little headboards, recording two poor fellows, First Nebraska Cavalry, as "killed by Indians" last October. The legend becomes dolefully monotonous. We rest a while at Pat's, and after an uneventful afternoon drive of three or four hours, we camp a couple of miles beyond Miller & Pennison's ranche; that is, thirteen wagons do so — the other half of the train having stopped near the station, thus treating with unseemly irreverence the regulations enjoined upon them by the imposing military govern-

ment of Kearney, as soon as they are fairly out of its reach.

Keith didn't get enough fun out of his "April fool" of the morning, so he must needs try another to-night — one which would be funny enough, did not time and place make it decidedly dangerous. Dick Turpin is the single victim this time. It is his part of camp duty to supply the cook with water. The Platte to-night is three hundred yards away, the old grass between us and the river is waist-high, the night threatens to be very dark, and we are in the hostile Indian country, with traces of the last raid everywhere about us. The jokers of Rice's party have for the past few days filled Dick's head so full of "Injun" that he has become very much rattled on the subject, though, to do him justice, he has just as much pluck as the next man. It is just about dusk — the creepy time of the evening, when the cook announces that he wants water. Dick, for the first time, fails to respond: he is decidedly scared, and won't go unless somebody goes with him.

After a good deal of loud talk, which would be transparent enough to anyone but Dick, three of the party volunteer to escort him if he will take the pails; and they march out of camp with an ostentatious display of firearms, Keith and another in advance and one in his rear, having first, however, taken the precaution to see that their victim carries nothing more dangerous than his water-pails. No sooner are they out of sight than two others of the party pick up their rifles and slip down through the tall grass about half-way to the river, one on either side of the trail. Dick gets his water all right, and with his escort is on his way back in high feather, when a blood-curdling yell sounds on the night air, the crack of rifles rings out all around him, Keith drops as though shot, and Dick, with a whoop that would shame a Sioux, drops his pails and spurts up to camp as if he had on the seven-league boots of the giant in the fairy tale. It is some while before he gets thoroughly cooled off, and then light slowly begins to dawn upon him; but Dick is a good

fellow, as slow to anger as he is mentally sluggish, so it all ends happily in a general laugh.

SUNDAY, *April 2d*, Twenty-third Day: Cloudy and threatening this morning. This journal of mine serves one purpose, at least — without it we might not know when the Sundays come in. Our thirteen wagons start out at seven o'clock, but two more of our military escort have mysteriously disappeared overnight, as but four show up when we take the road. A little way out we meet and pass an ox train of eighteen wagons, bound east for a freight. By nine o'clock rain begins to fall, and a half-hour later we pass Dan Smith's ranche, and pull up by the roadside "in corral" at Doc's suggestion, to see if the rain won't stop soon; but our boys are not inclined to be as deliberate as Rice, and in less than an hour we push on, with four other wagons, leaving him behind. Meantime the last fragment of our once imposing cavalry guard got somehow "lost in the shuffle," and we never

see them again. Before two o'clock we reach Gilman's ranche, the rain stops, and we build our camp-fire.

Gilman's used to be a favorite trading-post with the Sioux, but has quite recently been the scene of some lively scraps with some of its former savage patrons. It is now a military station of some importance, the soldiers' quarters occupying about a dozen log houses. During the afternoon we have a call from one of the sergeants, who is a good fellow, and probably glad enough to have a gossip with somebody from the outside world, and in an hour or two by our camp-fire he gives us a good deal of interesting chat about the Indians and the troops. After supper he comes over again, and we return with him to the officers' quarters, where he introduces us to Captain Porter, the commander of the post, a very genial gentleman of thirty-five or so, who turns out to be a New-Yorker like ourselves, and as (though a West-Pointer) he is not too inordinately vain of his shoulder-straps, nor too much impressed with the weight

of his position, like some of his fellows in this military department, we pass a very jolly evening with him.

We carry in our stock of provisions a supply of dried apples and the plain white beans — common enough, and indeed too often despised at the home tables we have lately left, but which we soon come to regard as luxuries on the road. The regular Plainsman's fare is simple enough, so plain that oftentimes he perforce takes his always milkless coffee without sugar — something we have not yet been obliged to come down to; while as to those that I have called luxuries, it is rarely if ever that the professional bullwhacker sees them. They need so much time for their cooking that the Plainsman who makes long daily drives would on that account, if no other, be obliged to forego them. It is only when we make an early camp that we attempt to prepare them; and then, when the pot is filled with either (for cold consumption a day or two after along the road), some one has to sit

by the fire and watch it simmer, without burning, until the cooking is done, and this usually means a midnight vigil.

It sometimes, indeed, proves to be labor lost, when you creep under the wagon next morning, for instance, to get the pot of cooked apples that you hung up snugly on the wagon-reach on going to bed, only to find that that mischievous young horse Billy, of Norman's team, has been there before you, and emptied it clean of its contents. This lively rascal has a sharp scent, and a human liking for little tid-bits which doesn't even consider the cost of our "dollar-a-pound" butter when we have at rare intervals secured a little dab at one of the ranches, and it has been carelessly left over night where his prying snout could get at it.

It has come my turn at least once out here on the Platte to "watch the pot," and I have found it anything but irksome. By nine o'clock, perhaps, the boys begin to drop off to bed, and very soon after I have tne camp-fire all to myself. On these high Plains, in good weather, the night air is exceptionally pure

and clear, and the sky brilliant with stars. The splendor of the night, indeed, is often enough in itself to beguile one from sleep: the myriad stars around the centre of the deep blue vault above seem to hang — literally hang — by silver threads, while on the sloping sides they stand out in sharp relief; and they come so close down to the horizon all around you, that one might easily fancy himself on the ocean, were it not for the fire, and the corral of wagons over there in the shadows. The stock are either picketed near by, or some, for greater security, tied with their heads to the wagon-wheels inside the circle. As the night advances, the stillness becomes intense: there is no sound except from the occasional cropping of the new grass by some one of the animals lariated on the plain, or the turning of some restless sleeper in one of the wagons.

The sense of the singular loneliness of the Plains at such a time is overpowering; and one is forced to admire the courage of the pioneers of this highway — plunging as they did into an unknown and uncharted wilder-

ness, fixing their daily position by the sun, or "catching" one of the stars at night in that blazing galaxy overhead, which seems now to magnify to the eye the vastness and emptiness of the great plain below. The view is clear for miles ahead and behind you, while the low sand-bluffs off to the left seem to have gained in distance so that they now appear to be no more than a dark smudge on the southern horizon. Suddenly from out of their shadows comes the wailing, almost human cry of some wandering coyote, the lean and hungry scavenger of the desert. He has seen our fire, and being with all his cunning but a cowardly brute, fear keeps him at his distance; but his scent is keen, and instinct or experience no doubt tells him that in a few hours the flame will have smoldered, and we shall be miles away, leaving him a free range among the bones and scraps and usual debris of a deserted camp, so he bides his time.

Soon a distant rumbling sound breaks in on my musings from down in the east, and approaches rapidly, but still with little increase

of noise, and in a very few minutes the overland coach, with its half-dozen horses or mules on a steady gait, glides by on the road a hundred yards away, with three or four shadowy figures on top, and perhaps the red end of the segar of some wakeful passenger glowing intermittently like a firefly from the window below; but all in absolute silence except for the dull roll of the wheels — and all to disappear again in another few minutes down in the western sky among the stars.

Accustomed as we have become to our necessarily deliberate methods of progress — making fifteen or twenty miles to-day, and perhaps lying storm-bound in camp to-morrow, or plodding along at one or two miles an hour through the mud or rain for the mere sake of making a more advanced camp than yesterday's — this coach, rolling along so easily and quietly through the night, seems to move with the speed of an express train. In three days and nights more, it will no doubt be in Denver — while we? Still, after all, what have we to complain of? We are making fair

progress for pilgrims — and, indeed, we are not pressed for time; we are drinking in health with every breath of this glorious air of the Plains; we eat as heartily and sleep as soundly as children; and we even have occasional luxuries: here is a great pot of delicious stewed apples — "done" — to add to our bill of fare for the road to-morrow. My watch tells me it is midnight, and after safely stowing away my *bonne bouche*, I join the sleepers in the silent corral.

MONDAY, *April 3d*, Twenty-fourth Day: Still cloudy and threatening. We leave camp at eight o'clock, after having seen the eleven-wagon train which we left behind yesterday pass up the road ahead of us — but that doesn't worry us any, as we are of lighter weight and better equipped than anything we have yet seen on the road, and we are also quite alive to the fact that we have thus far been in the van. We bid good-bye to our friendly captain and sergeant, who are good enough to come out of their quarters to see us off, and as we pass up

the road, a glance behind shows us Doc Rice's canvas-covers coming up from the east, about four miles astern. They will overtake us at Cottonwood, which is to-day's goal.

The clouds break away in an hour or two, and we travel under a beautiful blue sky for the rest of the day. We soon pass our friends who forged ahead in the morning, and once more our two little wagons are showing the others the road. We roll along for eight miles or so with no other company and with nothing more to interest the eye than the lonely telegraph poles, the barren plain, and the glistening, placid river — and then what we do meet is a ruin: a cabin has been here — somebody's first rough attempt at a home; there are a few blackened logs left, but we don't need to ask how it was done nor who did it, for just off the road, a few yards away, are two rude mounds enclosed by a log fence: the whole pathetic story is there, and a child might read it.

An hour or two later, the natural features of the country suddenly improve — I might

say that the scenery now as compared with the early morning has really become pretty. The plain on the south of us now varies from two to five miles in width to the bluffs on our left, and we keep the river off to the right of us at from a half-mile to a mile, for it winds somewhat. Its uniform width along here is about a half-mile, and to-day a great number of little islands have come into it. These are covered with the native cottonwood trees and a thick underbrush, while a narrow line of the same trees skirts the river on both banks. The plain on the far side of the Platte to the bordering bluffs on the north is of the same width and character as on our side, while over the whole the march of spring is already leaving its impress in the faint green of the welcome new grass. The general effect is decidedly pleasing: quite an oasis is this pretty grouping of river, islands, trees, and green plain, with the blue sky over all, after the gray and brown effects that have so long wearied the eye in the long reaches of plain we have put behind us; but now that the

spring has fairly begun, it makes such rapid advances that even a day's changes attract one's notice.

We have the islands with us for the remaining several miles of our morning march, during which also we pass two or three ranches along the road, and by noon we reach Cottonwood Springs. Here we drive into a large corral, an extensive stockade of logs, in one corner of which, at the front, is the station house, and in the other corner, separated from it by the main gateway, are two or three log cabins, on the door of one of which a notice requests all pilgrims to "leave twenty-five cents at the station whenever they use the cabin for cooking purposes." The interior is luxuriously furnished with a small cook-stove and two boxes, the latter presumably to be used for chairs or tables, according to the pilgrims' necessity or choice. We make our camp outdoors, however, on such a fine day, and as we are in great spirits at our recent progress, and inclined to give ourselves a treat, we buy from the station-keeper several cans of

"cove" oysters at an unconscionable price, and some very dirty butter at a dollar a pound, and luxuriate in an oyster stew, after which we have a royally idle time for the remainder of the day, inspecting the post and discussing our chances of going on.

A little way up the road is Fort McPherson, one hundred miles west of Fort Kearney, and second only to it in military importance. Its log buildings occupy a space fully two hundred and fifty yards square, enclosed by the usual log stockade, five or six feet high, and are occupied by a strong garrison. The same rule as to one hundred wagons or a hundred men is said to be enforced here as at Kearney, and as we find three or four west-bound trains already encamped here, awaiting reinforcements, our chances seem to be very good, especially as Doc Rice's seven wagons come along during the afternoon to help swell our numbers. Just before we drove in here, a short distance down the road, there was some little commotion among our fellows ahead, and then a quick, startling cry, putting every-

one on the alert all the way down the line of wagons: "Look yonder, boys, look yonder!" It proved to be — a woman, walking quietly along the highway, and heading for one of the cabins, of which there are quite a cluster grouped near and sheltered by the big military post.

Whether it is because we are crossing so early in the season, or that the very recent Indian troubles have held them back for the time being, we have overtaken or travelled with no emigrant trains, and have therefore met with no women on the route. If we had, God knows they would have seemed sadly out of place on this homeless highway; although Parkman and others, whose books we have read, noted the presence of many of them years ago (with children, too) in the great trains bound on six-months' journeys to the extreme Northwest — still, that was before the blight of Indian warfare had made this the land of desolation that we find it.

TUESDAY, *April 4th*, Twenty-fifth Day:

There is a light snow on the ground this morning, just enough to spoil the roads for a few hours. It disappears by noon, and the roads dry up quickly, but it is then too late in the day to make a start, so we take up our quarters in the pilgrims' cabin, in company with the men of the other trains encamped about here, and cook our meals turn and turn about. During the good weather of the afternoon, we call on the boys of Rice's camp, a mile above us, and in the evening report at the post to the Major commanding, who obligingly says we shall move to-morrow morning; but even a military autocrat may be overruled sometimes, and as we later on listen to the howling of the winds that come up during the night, and note their gradually increasing violence, we instinctively feel that the commandant's authority is to be set aside for the time being, and that his "permit," usually so potent, will in this instance avail us nothing, however well inclined he may be to push us along.

WEDNESDAY, *April 5th*, Twenty-sixth Day: We went to bed last night in Nebraska, but as we awaken this morning, we may easily imagine ourselves in Siberia — indeed, we are for a time in considerable doubt as to just where we are. We can see and very sensibly feel that we are buried under a great blanket of snow, but as to anything beyond that fact, or beyond the condition of our especial individual wagon, it is for some minutes impossible to tell. The air is filled with a fine snow, so thick that one can see nothing else, and there is a frightful gale blowing, which whirls this about with such violence that it is positively dangerous to expose one's face for more than an instant or so. Briefly, we are in the grasp of a Plains blizzard, and happy it is for us that we are camped within the walls of this stockade, as we can't wander far if we attempt to move — we must butt up against something in travelling a few yards in any direction, and in the crowded condition of the corral, that something must necessarily be a friendly wagon or one of

the log cabins, and this would mean aid or shelter, or both.

We watch our chances, and in a temporary lull one or two of the boys manage to tramp out a trail through the snow between the wagons, and after some minutes we all reach the shelter of the cabin with such provisions, books and other articles as we may need through the day, as it is evident the storm means to stay with us for many hours yet. Here we make ourselves snug and comfortable, and proceed to get breakfast, which we have barely finished, however, before men of the other trains begin to gather for cooking purposes, and we relinquish the stove to them. Fresh wagons also manage to arrive, in spite of the blinding storm, and their cooks come in to prepare their meals under shelter. By the time the last crew has finished breakfast, we are ready to begin on our dinner — and so it goes, turn and turn about all day, there being at no time less than two dozen men assembled in this cabin, twenty-five feet one way and twenty the

other, spacious enough for an ordinary party, but rather crowded under these conditions. Still the occupants all cheerfully adapt themselves to circumstances, and they even find space enough to locate several euchre and poker parties here and there, while two or three of us secure quiet corners in which to read and smoke.

This is the most numerous crowd of Plainsmen that we have yet been thrown in with at any one time — these that the great storm has temporarily driven in for shelter; and, huddled together as we are, we perforce make close acquaintance with them. They are practically all of them "regulars" of the Plains — freighters, bound to Bannock, or Oregon, or Salt Lake with a cargo, or returning thence empty to pick up one at the River; they are seemingly fair average representatives of their class, and if we have hitherto, as was perhaps natural, expected to find that class largely composed of the tough or lawless element, this forced association for a day or two in the corral and the cabin, we are bound to say, leads

us to revise our opinions. They are all dirty — that of course (so are we) — and many of them are rough and uncouth and illiterate; but as a rule they are also good-natured, helpful and willing; and we are surprised to find among them manly men who prove to have at some time lived under far better conditions.

There, for instance, are a couple of young fellows, evidently farmers' boys, fresh from some Western state, with the scent of the hayrick still clinging to them. They have heard us singing, and have left their corner of the cabin to join us, and possibly to let us know that we don't monopolize all the musical talent of the crowd, by striking up "Rosalie, the Prairie Flower," which they sing as a duet in a way that is simply delicious, both from its nasal style and the seriousness of its rendition, as though there was a touch of tender reminiscence in it. These boys are novices, no doubt — for they seem as guileless as our Dick — and may not fairly be called representative Plainsmen; but, when the soothing evening pipes are lighted here and there, and you fall

into chat with some of the rugged elders — veterans who have crossed and recrossed with wagon trains perhaps for half a score of years — and you pierce their outer crust of dirt, and tan, and scars, you find yourself surprised at their betraying a knowledge of better things than the present surroundings, and a latent regard for and understanding of the decencies of life that you would never suspect was hidden under that rough and forbidding Plains veneer. We are led into comparisons of these good, homely, sturdy fellows with the drivers that we have met in two or three Government trains, here and there, and are forced to the conclusion that the Government for some reason enjoys a monopoly of such of the "offscourings of civilization," so called, as have found their way to the Plains.

By nightfall we are again left in sole possession of the cabin, and as the storm still rages furiously, and the air is bitterly cold, we roll ourselves up in our blankets on the earthen floor, keep the stove full, and chuckle in comfort as we listen to the howling of the

wind, and the thrashing of the snow against the windows.

THURSDAY, *April 6th*, Twenty-seventh Day: The storm is over, but the snow of course still covers everything, and the air is still bitterly cold. The roads are impassable, and we don't even discuss the chances of moving. We cling to the cabin, and pass the day much the same as yesterday. The sun breaks through the clouds by noon, and by the middle of the afternoon it is already having a marked effect upon the snow. About four o'clock, as we are eating an early supper, we hear loud firing from the Fort, and on looking out from our cabin we see shells bursting over the bluffs behind us; while at intervals between the cannon-shots, we notice a squad of soldiers, drawn up in line, firing their carbines in the air. As this is entirely at variance with our ideas of Plains Indian warfare, and there is no other enemy in sight, we conclude it must be a salute of some kind, although the bursting shells are still rather mystifying; so

we go up to the Fort to inquire, and almost fall over one another when we are answered, laconically but heartily, "Richmond is taken!"

The news had just been flashed over the single wire across the Plains, and we presume at this moment, wherever the flag is waving on this wild western half of the continent, whether over one of these big military posts, or at some obscure or lonely stage station, with its little corporal's guard (like Pat Mullaly's, for instance), the garrisons are paying it the same glad homage in testimony of victory, and as a welcome to the happy prospects of peace. The word is quickly passed around through the various camps, and there is general and noisy rejoicing; numbers of the men file into the cabin with us, and we have a grand outburst of patriotic and other song in honor of the event, and carry the jubilation well into the night.

FRIDAY, *April 7th*, Twenty-eighth Day: Cold but fine this morning, and we prepare to move as a matter of course, although we have

no formal permit from the Fort, and besides are still very far from mustering the required one hundred men. Perhaps we have been overlooked for the time being in the general jubilation over the Richmond news: however that may be, we decide to take the chances of being stopped, so we move out about seven o'clock, in company with nine other teams, and pass the long stockade without any warning hail from the sentries. At Fitchie's ranche, a mile out, we pass Doc's camp, but they all seem to be asleep; we don't disturb them, as we know they will overtake us after a while: so here we are on the highway again, eleven wagons and sixteen men, fairly started on the next stage — to Julesburg, one hundred miles west, and about as ticklish a bit of "Injun" country as there is on all the wide Plains. So much for military oversight!

We make twelve miles by noon, and stop a while for lunch at Jack Morrow's ranche, which is said to be a little the finest on the whole route. Jack Morrow is one of the

characters of the Plains — famed as a scout, and happy in the possession of a squaw, or some other kind of influential Indian connection which is said to insure him against attack. He has a handsome and extensive log building, filled to the roof with a general stock of Plains staples. There is no great variety, perhaps, but as for quantity, his shelves of canned goods look like the long courses of brick in a blank house-wall: tier on tier of sardines, tomatoes and peaches — these seem to monopolize to a large extent the canning industry, or at least they appear to form the chief demand of the Plains trade of this class; and as to liquid comforts, while, singularly enough, there is no great display of whiskey or kindred plain liquors, you may buy stacks of the "log-cabin" bottles of Drake's Plantation Bitters! There seems to be a vast consumption of these — for while, fortunately for the mental rest of the weary pilgrim, there are no rocks or other available surfaces on the Plains on which to paint the cabalistic "S. T.-1860-X." with which Drake's advertising fiends

have covered so many of the picturesque points of the dear old Hudson river, we have found the curiously-shaped empty bottles in such quantities in places along the road as, in Western parlance, to fairly "blaze the trail."

Hard by Jack's prosperous-looking store house we see for the first time the last resting-place of an Indian brave. It can't be called a burial-place, for the woven bed or frame which is made to hold the body is raised eight or ten feet above the ground, lashed at the corners to four upright poles, and open to the sky and to whatever storms may come his way, with no other protection than the buffalo-robe in which the body has been rolled; neither, in this particular case, can this be properly called the brave's last resting-place, as we find him (or what is left of him) on the ground beneath, with plenty of marks of rough treatment on him, and with nothing but a few handfuls of beads scattered round about — samples of all the gewgaws and ornaments that the Indian corpse is generally dressed with, to carry to the happy hunting grounds.

It is evident that soldiers or pilgrims have been here before us, and also that they have not been very dainty in their way of handling the body; they apparently have also found the buffalo-robe a little too far gone to be of any value as a souvenir or otherwise, as they have allowed that to stay by "the remains." We inspect all of this curiously, however, as it is a novelty to us, and the memory of it stays by me long afterward, and I get to wondering what after all becomes of the savage when he gets the final stroke that destroys his usefulness in slaughtering helpless white women and children. This is the first place of the kind we have yet seen, and we are half-way across the Plains, although we are told this is a common Indian method of disposing of the dead; but even if not, we have seen no mounds nor anything else that might account for even a handful of the tens of thousands of savages that once roamed over these mighty wastes.

I might say also, however, that neither have we yet feasted our eyes on a single

buffalo — and yet this was once his native heath.* Indeed, within a very few years the buffalo have crossed this highway at times in such countless, inconceivable numbers, as to occupy two or three days in the migration, during which time, also, they would be always steadily moving — one great, black mass as far as the eye could reach. Possibly they change their ground with the seasons, and they may now be down on the Smoky Hill or the Arkansas rivers, a hundred or two hundred miles further south; but even so, there cannot now be a tithe of the numbers there used to be roaming these plains; and it occurs to me that here are questions worth the study of some of those odd fellows who gather up curious statistics: what has become of the buffalo? and where do good Indians go when

*"At any time between the years 1824 and 1836," says Fremont (writing in 1843), "a traveller might start from any given point south or north in the Rocky Mountain range, journeying by the most direct route to the Missouri — and, during the whole distance (about six hundred miles as the bird flies), his road would always be among large bands of buffalo, which would never be out of his view until he arrived almost within sight of the abodes of civilization."

they die? or rather, what becomes of the dead Indians? as these form the only class answering to "good" in this part of the country. Artemas Ward's saying expresses better than anything else the sentiment of the frontiersman —"Injuns is pizen, whar ever found."

There is nothing further of interest in the day's march. A couple of hours beyond Jack Morrow's we pass Fremont Slough or Diamond Springs—an old station, deserted save by one family. Six miles further on we go into camp at Bishop's ranche, and here some of the laggard teams soon after come up, increasing our force to seventeen wagons and twenty-four men. The weather has grown quite cold, so we go inside the station, cook our supper there, spread our buffaloes on the floor, and have a good night's sleep alongside a comfortable fire.

SATURDAY, *April 8th*, Twenty-ninth Day: Extremely cold and windy this morning, and all the weather indications very threatening. This day's stage would naturally include the

passage of O'Fallon's Bluffs, and this seems to be as much an object of dread to these Plainsmen as the doubling of the Hatteras capes is to the sailorman. The Bluffs are fifteen miles ahead, and about half-way there the Platte forks — the north branch leading you northwest to old Fort Laramie and beyond, while the south fork, continuing its westerly trend for a few miles, makes a big sweep to the southwest, to its source well up in the Mountains, through Denver and fifty miles or more beyond.

It is at the Bluffs that the two streams begin to diverge from each other, and in the elbow made by the rather sharp bend of the south fork, the Bluffs come abruptly down to the river, so that the road perforce must cross them. They are high and broken enough to make it a fairly rugged thoroughfare for several miles, and are so exposed that the winds have a clean sweep, and, as the Plainsmen tell it, there are many pleasanter places to meet a storm in. Small wonder, then, that we have rather a serious discussion

Cottonwood blizzard, but rather mild and wet.

We start out at eight o'clock, and jog along easily until eleven, when we stop for water under the ruins of an old station — and here we meet with our first accident. As we are getting under way again, this same Phil, who came so near being turned into a snow-man last night, slips and falls when climbing up to the box of the big wagon, and the fore-wheel passes over his right leg. The weight of the wagon with its freight is easily three tons, but fortunately there is sufficient depth of snow to relieve the pressure of the wheel on his leg, so that the injury is not serious — although it costs us much time in converting the smaller wagon into an ambulance, so that he can ride easily through the day, as this means several days of helplessness for him.

By the middle of the afternoon we arrive at Alkali station, now quite an important military post, and here we find encamped Hopkins and others who have been in advance of us for two or three days, so that we altogether round up thirty wagons and thirty-

six men. We dutifully report ourselves to the commandant, who orders us to move on about a mile and a half, and there go into camp to wait for more trains to come up. In our zeal to obey his orders, we continue moving until we have covered five miles, and make camp at five o'clock in two corrals by the ruins of an old ranche-house. We are glad anyway to escape from Alkali, for not only is the place itself about as dreary a location as any we have seen, but the entire plain in its vicinity is white with the stuff from which it gets its name, and which is sufficiently poisonous in its effects to be often fatal to the stock feeding on the grass impregnated with it, while all the water in its neighborhood is so tainted as to be almost undrinkable, and to spoil the coffee made with it.

MONDAY, *April 10th*, Thirty-first Day: We turn out this morning at half-past five, only to find ourselves again "under the snow." Everything is covered by a blanket of white, and I presume we must expect hard travelling

occasionally to assert his right to regulate his own movements, even at the expense of personal comfort.

This place is a famous old trading post,* and Beauvais is an old French trader or trapper, or both, who has been located here for the best part of a generation. It is at a point on the Platte, six hundred yards wide, called the "old California crossing" — the only safe fording place for many miles — and where trains bound for the far West and Northwest leave our road, ford the south branch, then cross northward over some miles of rolling country to the north fork, and follow its course, which leads them to old Fort Laramie and beyond — all of which becomes very easy to understand by a glance at the map. Captain Bonneville will tell you how he converted his wagon-boxes into boats, and ferried across at this identical spot thirty-three years ago, with his company of over one

*The site of Beauvais' old post is opposite the station of Bovier, on the Union Pacific Railway. The name of the railway station is probably a corruption of Beauvais.

hundred men, and how the buffalo in sight were so numerous that he didn't have time to stop and count them all.

Just now there is quite a settlement about the old ranche — one big "doby" storehouse, with three or four small "dobys" alongside, and across the road a barrack for a small garrison now stationed here. We are given one of the small "dobys," which we enter by a doorway four feet high, and which has about twenty feet of depth to its ten feet of width. Soon a blazing fire, and soon after that a good supper, warm us up and cause us to forget the snow and wet and chill of the wintry day. There are no Brussels carpets between us and the natural floor of the hut, but we have grown so accustomed to our buffaloes and blankets that we fail at the time to note the fact. It is enough that we go to sleep contented and comfortable.

TUESDAY, *April 11th*, Thirty-second Day: The snow has ceased during the night. We take the road at eight o'clock. The clouds

about starting out, in the face of the threatening weather, especially as our stock are well sheltered where we are. As this is not the case with our fellow-travellers, they decide to push on at least to the next station, where they can also get shelter. We bide a while, but as in a couple of hours a Government train (which we had seen at Cottonwood) comes in sight, we leave the ranche and fall into line with it.

In about four hours we reach the Bluffs, without misadventure or any special change in the weather. We stop for a lunch, but the Government train puts up for the day, as it would be against all precedent for such a train to be in any kind of a hurry. There are several stranger wagons encamped here, but after a bite we leave them to keep company with our Government friends, and push into the Bluffs alone, meaning to camp to-night on the western side if possible. Our only adventure on the passage is a meeting with a train of ten big-bowed prairie-schooners, bound east. In a couple of hours or so, we emerge

on the other side in good order, and somewhat inclined to regard the Bluffs as a bug-a-boo for tenderfeet (which we don't any longer consider ourselves). A drive of four miles beyond brings us to the ruins of an old adobe corral, where we find already encamped the train which left us this morning; so we drive in and put up for the night under the shelter of one of its walls.

SUNDAY, *April 9th*, Thirtieth Day: Snowed under again — everything covered with "the beautiful" as we turn out of our wagons. What looks like a white mound near by startles us somewhat by moving, and more in the next instant by standing itself up on end and indulging in a lively shake, but, denuded of snow, it proves to be only Phil Brown, who took a notion last night to roll himself in his buffalo on the tempting green just outside the corral, as a change from the confined quarters of the wagon. The air is filled with a light snow, which continues for some hours, but is fortunately not like the

again. This is discouraging, especially after having had at intervals a taste enough of spring to know how pleasant a tint of green and a sunny, mild air can make even this lonely road. To judge from the prospect at this minute, with the wintry coldness in the air, it might as well be January for all one would know to the contrary without consulting the calendar. Well, we must get out of this, anyhow, and travel until we can strike a decent shelter for selves and stock; so by seven o'clock we lead the way, as we find the other wagons are disposed to lag — and, indeed, by the time the entire lot have taken the road, there is a good mile of distance between our forward wagon and the rear of the train, which is broken up into several groups, straggling along at wide intervals, and in beautiful shape to be gathered in piecemeal should any enterprising Sioux or Cheyenne braves swoop down on us this white morning; so it is a little comforting to learn that as a class they are no more partial to snow than we are — likewise their ponies.

We travel through four or five miles of absolute white blankness, and then pass a nameless stage station — a log house occupied by a few soldiers, and a log stable, all looking as comfortless as a Siberian picture in a story-book. Another few miles of blankness, and we pass an encampment of two dozen wagons, snowbound on the plain. In these intervals we meet neither animals nor human beings, and see nothing but the almost blinding whiteness of the plain, the stormy gray of the sky, and the bare telegraph poles, with an occasional bit of the river. By four in the afternoon we reach Beauvais' ranche, and, with the greater part of the train, decide to stay, while a few push on two miles further, where there is said to be a ruined, roofless adobe corral. The snow is falling all this time, and why these fellows choose to leave a comfortable looking place like this, where one can at least run under cover occasionally and warm up, is only to be explained on the theory of the defiant independence of the old Plainsman, who is cranky on some points, and likes

soon begin to break away, and by noon the sun shines bright and warm out of a beautiful sky — but the road! such pulling we haven't had since we were down in the rolling prairies of Kansas. We are stalled in one place for a full hour, with the snow and mud up to the hubs, requiring for the first time on our entire journey "all hands at the wheels" — that is to say, through the entire train the wagons one by one have to be helped over one particular piece of bottom land. At eleven o'clock we pass an encampment of twenty-five or thirty wagons bound for Denver, which have not moved from this particular spot for eight days, and the men tell us they have been *on the road all winter!* which sets us to thinking that after all we have little to grumble at — and that indeed we have had great good luck, as it is only a month to-day since we left Atchison.

We make eight miles by noon, and after having helped our friends through as I have said, we push on ahead for the afternoon in company with four other wagons, all the rest of the train being too heavily laden to keep

up with our pace in such roads as these. We add another eight miles to our record during the afternoon, and go into camp early under a beautiful sky and on a fine piece of ground opposite Burt's ranche — a stage station with a small garrison. The soldiers give us confirmation of the war news we heard at Cottonwood, with the addition of the later tidings that Lee and his army have surrendered to Grant. Several of the laggard wagons come up before evening and join our camp, making fourteen in all — and under a beautiful bright moon we sing far into the night and over and over again all the war and national songs in honor of Grant's glorious victory.

WEDNESDAY, *April 12th*, Thirty-third Day: Queer weather; cold and cloudy as we break camp, after such a beautiful night — but as the morning advances the sky brightens, and by noon it is again beautiful and warm. Five miles out we pass another encampment of stormbound wagons — about twenty in all. A few miles beyond this the Platte makes

another turn to the southwest, and here we cross the line and enter Colorado! This looks good as I write it, and sounds good as we cheerily pass the word along to one another — having been coached in our geography by some of the train men who have worked their passage on this road before; but while this may be the eastern entrance to the promised land, there's a stretch of two hundred weary miles yet to be covered before we end our Plains pilgrimage, and even then we shall not have got to the centre of it; and if what we see on the road immediately upon our entrance is a fair sample of the welcome they give strangers and pilgrims, we are not at all certain that we shall care to sojourn long.

Here are the smoke-blackened walls of what was once some poor rancheman's home; and within a hundred yards of it are the remains of a train of twenty wagons, lying alongside the road in the positions in which they had been suddenly corralled for defence at the time of disaster, most of them reduced to broken and shapeless wrecks of

burnt wood and bent iron — a few of them just a little scorched and almost intact; all around the circle, and still in their charred yokes, lie the dead oxen — all more or less roasted — that had formed the motive power; while for many yards in every direction, scattered over the plain, are tons of farming and mining machinery — destined, by their marks, for Central and Salt Lake Cities — with which the wagons had been freighted. There is still one feature necessary to the *ensemble* — and this we find about one hundred and fifty yards away, in a cluster of fifteen newly-made graves by the roadside. What a picture! and it is all so evidently recent as to make one feel a bit uncomfortable. We find on examination that it dates back only to the middle of February — less than sixty days ago!

A mile beyond this, we pass the ruins of the "first" Julesburg — a couple of burnt adobe houses, or fragments of them, marks of the same savage raid of February. The new Julesburg, hardly two months old, is a mile

farther on, and embraces three or four lone adobes (partly officers' quarters) and a cemetery, large for so young and small a town — fifteen graves of soldiers and others killed in the February fights. It was in these that Captain O'Brien, the commandant of the post, with a small force of troopers, dismounted, and a few volunteers — not fifty men in all — stood off an immense number of the red fiends who had enticed him out and then surrounded him on the open plain; broke through their lines with the help of a small relief party from the garrison; secured a couple of howitzers, returned to the attack, and gave the savages their first experience of the finely destructive power of shells — these and his unerring rifles together slaying at least a hundred warriors.

The place is now quite an important military station, boasting a garrison of one hundred and fifty men at Fort Sedgwick, from which we see the flag flying, several hundred yards distant; among these are a company of Pawnees, in Uncle Sam's uniform, who are shortly to start for Fort Laramie, to

accompany an expedition against the Sioux, with whom they have an ancient and deadly feud. Some of the braves visit our camp as we stop for nooning, and are made blissfully happy with great hunks of bread and molasses, and a few plugs of tobacco.

As, much to our surprise, we are not detained here by the military authorities, we push on during the afternoon for nine miles further along the river, and make an early camp in fine weather at what was once Cold Springs ranche, with the burned and broken cargo of another ill-fated wagon train lying scattered all around us. Doc Rice's party, with our own Dick, have some way been lost sight of lately in the various shiftings and changes in the train, following upon bad weather and bad roads, and we have therefore, with the exception of last night, not had anything much of an evening in the way of music or other amusement. To-night, however, we are ourselves entertained by some long and lanky Missourians who have been rolling along with us for a

few days. There is a beautiful moonlight, the plain is temptingly green, and these great, loose-jointed, good-natured fellows, who look half-starved, ragged and dirty, have a fiddle and a fiddler. They organize a cotillion, in which the ladies are indicated by a piece of dirty-white canvas tied around the left arm; and they dance for an hour or more in a serious, business-like way that is irresistibly funny. Still they seem to get plenty of enjoyment out of it for themselves, although most of the laughter and applause comes from the lookers-on; and we don't begrudge them a bit of it, for they all seem poor enough, both in person and outfit — and I fancy their old, battered fiddle is their most valued possession.

THURSDAY, *April 13th*, Thirty-fourth Day: This is as lovely a morning as the sun ever shone on; but after the ball of last night on the greensward, we seem to be a little lazy in making a start, for it is past eight when we leave camp. To our surprise the road has suddenly become somewhat hilly and very

sandy, which some of the old stagers with us explain by saying that we are now on a part of the "great American desert." It is a playful way they have of "stuffing" young greenhorns; still, whatever they may call it, we have certainly run into a belt full of sand dunes, and ridges, and pools, in the latter of which the wheels sink at times from six inches to a foot, making it very hard pulling and slow travelling.

During the morning we pass several more ruined adobes, blackened by fire, that were somebody's homes scarcely two months ago. There must have been some devilish work along here in January and February — these signs are so plenty now that we see nothing else, apart from the stations, which are all little forts of themselves. It happened once lately that we looked in at one of these when the coach had stopped for dinner, and in this way we got one of our rare glimpses of the woman of the station, and heard some of the gossip between the passengers and the rancheman. The talk never wanders far from the one un-

failing subject of the Indians and the chances of fresh raids. The eating-room invariably has its stack of rifles in the corner, ready for instant service, and everything about the place suggests a state of constant alertness, and a fear of attack from an unseen foe who may strike without warning at any moment. The rancheman's wife, nervous of manner and pallid of face, contributes her share to the table-talk in the intervals of serving the various dishes: only six weeks ago, she says, she came out from Iowa to join her husband, and scarcely a day of it all has been free from alarms, while never for a moment has the strain of the watching been relaxed — and there is a hunted, uneasy look in her eyes that adds a pitiful emphasis to her story. Cruel indeed must be the necessity that causes a woman to make such a place her home under these conditions.

At noon we stop for a rest and lunch under the walls of another old ranche house, and about the ruins we find an encampment of Colorado soldiers — 90-days men — called into

service because of the late Indian raids. After an hour's pleasant gossip with them, we push along again through the heavy sand-pools, but for the first time in our journey fail to "keep up with the procession," of which, indeed, we have all along been in the van. By half-past six our two wagons reach Lillian Springs, with every one pretty well exhausted by the day's struggle, and with knowledge of the humiliating fact that all the rest of the train have gone a mile and a half beyond before camping. Happily, we have plenty of company, however, for here we find another camp of Colorado boys; we also find more ruins, and we drive in under the lee of the smoke-blackened walls for shelter from the strong easterly wind that is blowing the sand about at a lively rate, and making it almost impossible for our cook to get his fire started and under control so as to give us our usual hot supper, especially as by this time it has become quite dark; so we take what we can get, and we hear no murmuring.

FRIDAY, *April 14th*, Thirty-fifth Day: This is another very beautiful morning, with a strong westerly breeze. We break camp at seven o'clock, and soon find ourselves on a fine road, though still somewhat hilly. We have run so soon out of the sand belt that we suspect the "great American desert" of yesterday must be a trifle narrow — for a desert. We travel fast, that is to say, about three miles an hour, with the river in plain sight all the way, distant now a few yards and now a half-mile. After a splendid morning's march we reach the Washington ranche — the finest, excepting Jack Morrow's, that we have yet seen on the Platte. This is one of the few that escaped injury in the recent winter raids — eight men having successfully defended it against a large attacking band of Indians. By two o'clock we reach Valley station, now occupied by more of the Colorado soldier boys, who, as we pass, are killing time by riding horse races, bareback, and may, we fear, succeed also in killing some of themselves yet, as one of the boys is badly thrown, in

plain sight of the train. Before this we have retrieved our reputation by catching up with the caravan, and we all go into camp together four miles beyond Valley,* and one mile east of Wisconsin ranche, early in the afternoon on a fine bit of ground a quarter-mile from the river.

The day has been without incident. Just before sunset some of the train-men call our attention to the western sky, where, commencing a little to the south of the sun, and extending off to the southeast, apparently resting on the plain, stretches a range of white clouds, looking much like rugged, snowy mountains rearing themselves on the far horizon. These, they tell us, are known to all Plainsmen as the "mountain clouds," and usually, if not always, are to be seen from the plain in similar shape and in that part of the

* It is extremely difficult to locate the exact sites of some of the famous points of the old Trail. Valley station was probably one or two miles west of the present Iliff station, on the Julesburg branch of the Union Pacific (on the opposite side of the river, of course), and Wisconsin ranche, five miles further west, Horsetail creek being the nearest stream coming into the Platte on the other side.

sky. To-morrow, our friends add, we shall have our first view of the Mountains themselves — and what a pleasant sight they will be, after so long a stretch of barren flatness!

Our progress has not been bad thus far: we are averaging, in good weather and bad, perhaps fifteen miles a day, and now that we have been a month or more on the road, pushing forward steadily and persistently, and the measured miles run into a good round figure, we begin to really understand, for the first time, perhaps, what a tremendous width of country these Plains cover — country that will some day, we suppose, be more or less settled up; and as we draw near to the western end of the long road, many are the sage discussions at the evening camp-fire as to its future. These are shared in by all hands, and are especially entertaining when several little trains get together, as now, on a common camping ground, and a larger number of visitors than usual gather for the evening chit-chat.

These small freighters, of course, are vitally interested — these, I mean, whose little bunches of wagons each represent personal business ventures. They have been earning good money thus far, and freight rates this spring are temptingly high: a tariff of from fifteen to twenty-five cents per pound to Denver (depending on the more or less "bulk" of the cargo) looks like big money to the man who can turn his three or four thousand dollars of capital into an equipment of a half-dozen wagons, each of which, with its two tons of freight aboard, will make him a gross earning of five or six hundred dollars in the two months' run (or less) from the River westward. This appears like a very snug little business, provided he doesn't meet with an undue share of disaster from storm or savage. Then, on his return empty, he can rattle back to the River in twenty-five to thirty days, perhaps also bringing a few passengers with him, whose fare, even at "pilgrim" rates, will help considerably toward lowering his expense account; and in this way, with ordinary good

luck, he can count on at least three round trips a year. All this time, moreover, his whole equipment is readily convertible back into cash at either end of the route, should he wish to leave the Plains and engage his capital in other ways.

Since the first "Pike's Peak" year, this business has assumed great proportions: I mean that of the small operators, as distinguished from the great contractors, such as Russell, Majors & Waddell. Indeed, some of our chance comrades here in camp were in the Salt Lake and Oregon trade before "Pike's Peak" was heard of as a gold region, needing provisions and other things for its maintenance to be hauled from beyond the River. But now comes the threat of a competitor for this hauling trade, and one so formidable as to promise in time to drive the freighter off the Plains; and this lies in the rumor of the early building of the great Pacific Railroad, which has been dreamed of, talked of, written of, and scoffed at for so many years.

Of course it is all still in the future; but

now that the War is over, the belief spreads rapidly that it cannot be long before the work will be begun; and it is probable that nowhere in the whole broad country is it now discussed more generally and more earnestly — and indeed more intelligently — than right here among these Plainsmen. We hear that a little strip of track perhaps ten miles long has been extended westward from the back door of Omaha. No one indeed takes this very seriously: but let the work once be inaugurated in real, sober earnest, and on a scale commensurate with its importance, and the paper scheme take the form of a tangible business enterprise, and from that day will these hardy, brave toilers see their business begin to shrink, with the certainty of its final extinguishment being merely a question of time. No wonder they discuss it.

Hitherto they have no doubt regarded it, as indeed a great majority of the people have done, probably, as a more or less vague and somewhat fantastic scheme — and with good reason, too, as it appears to us: one is slow to

grasp the idea of a railway being pushed forward into this desert region, which we have up to this point, for instance, already traversed for fully five hundred miles, and in that distance have not met (aside from others like ourselves) half that number of human beings, while outside of the relay stations, kept up mainly for the overland coach travel, we have certainly not seen a score of actual settlers' homes since we passed the frontier at the Big Blue, four hundred miles back; and there are still a hundred and fifty barren miles ahead of us to be covered before we shall reach the first possible objective point of a westbound railroad — Denver and the gold region. In this view the idea really seems preposterous; but perhaps it may prove indeed that the advancing railroad will head a procession of homesteaders who will locate themselves as the locomotive gradually opens the way.

As for ourselves, and others like us with the various trains, we are bound for the gold mines; and while we have no great confidence in the railroad spanning the great desert very

soon, we all indulge the hope that when it does finally reach its Denver terminal, we shall each have made our stakes, and be in condition to make an excursion "all rail" back to the old home. We are all agreed, in the light of our present experience, that it will seem strange indeed to be clattering back in a railroad train over these old camp-grounds, and viewing the prairie-dogs and the coyotes and the sage-brush from a car window; but on calculating the probable speed of such a method of travelling, we are somewhat astonished to find that, even at the minimum rate which a new railroad would likely maintain under the worst conditions, it need not take it more than two days and nights to cover the distance from Denver to the River.

This seems incredible. "Jimminy!" says our Dick, with his accustomed reckless profanity, "but won't that be travellin'? I'll bet, b'gosh, th't some o' these days a feller goin' East from Denver'll be able to git home between Sundays!" — and then becomes lost in an abstruse calculation of how many stacks of

cordwood he will have to pile up to save money enough for such a royal excursion some day: for Dick has heard of the princely figures paid for that kind of labor in the mining region, and has already settled on his future vocation.

SATURDAY, *April 15th*, Thirty-sixth Day: Such a succession of lovely mornings as we are now having soon makes one forget that there ever was such vile weather as this journal declares we experienced only a week or ten days ago. As I have noted before, one must be "in it" to realize the full beauty of the early hours of a fine day on these high Plains — it is very difficult to invest one with a full appreciation of it by any attempt at description. So I must content myself with saying that this is "another" beautiful morning. We leave camp at seven o'clock, and drive over a fine level country, with the plain between the bluffs and our side of the river at least three miles wide, and covered with a pretty carpet of green; and there is nothing ahead

of us to obstruct our view for eight or ten miles, while if we turn for a glance behind, we find the same clear sweep of vision for as great a distance down to the eastern horizon. It is a noble natural highway, and we put the miles behind us at a great rate all the morning.

By noon we are at the American ranche — or what is left of it — for this was one of last January's battle-fields, and there are indications of the work of the gentle savage all around it. He was here to the number of perhaps two hundred on the 16th of January, while poor Morrison, the rancheman, had but three men with him to help protect his family and property. The odds were too heavy against him, and it is only a week or two ago that the soldiers found his body in the Platte, close by, with seventeen arrows in it (he was missing for some weeks after the fight); while there are four graves across the road, about two hundred yards from the house, where his three defenders sleep beside him. His wife and children were carried away prisoners. The red men were forced to pay something for

their victory, however, and a part of the price lies here, in the road to this day — a dead Indian, flat on his back, with lustreless eyes staring at the sky, his right arm cut off at the elbow, both legs off and lying by his side, his body gashed and mutilated — a ghastly testimony to the ferocious hatred engendered in the Plainsman against him and his kind by their barbarous warfare of the past year. Several other red victims of the Morrison fight fell near him, and were carried off on the plain and buried by the soldiers who came after; but for some unexplained reason this fellow was left sprawling in this horrible fashion in the middle of the trail, to be driven over, and kicked, and cut up, and made the object of execration of every passing pilgrim.

Two miles beyond, and on the same or the next day in January, the same band of savages, or a part of it, attempted to repeat their experiment of cleaning out the ranche and starting a little cemetery for the white man by the roadside, but they soon found they had caught a Tartar, and after getting a little

taste of his quality they declined to make any closer acquaintance. This was at Godfrey's ranche.* Godfrey is something of a "character," and his house is peculiar in constrnction, like its master. He is, like Jack Morrow, one of the traders of the Plains, and his big storehouse, built of adobe, and deep and spacious, is packed full of goods for the pilgrim trade. He long ago foresaw the necessity of being in good condition for defence, and in the floor of his building, perhaps half-way back from the entrance, he shows us a trap-door, covering a shallow shaft from which runs a tunnel underground to a "dug-out" at the rear of his house — and this he had in reserve as a place of retreat for his family, should such necessity ever arise in a scrap with the red men. In front of the building, ten feet away, he had built an adobe stockade five or six feet high, protected by angles at the sides, and pierced for rifles. The whole structure he calls "Fort Wicked,"

*"Fort Wicked,"— Godfrey's ranche — was about opposite the site of the present station of Atwood, on the Union Pacific, Julesburg Division, and the American ranche was opposite the mouth of Pawnee creek, two miles east.

which is indicated by a small painted sign on the front of the house, near the top.

Here, on the day mentioned, he had three men with him behind the stockade, while just inside the front doorway of the main building were his wife, daughter, and two or three other women, who kept the men supplied with ammunition, and attended to their other wants. In this way the brave little garrison not only stood off the whole band without loss to themselves, but made vacancies in the lodges of several of the warriors. There is a pretty story (true, also, but thrilling as any fiction) of Godfrey's fourteen-year-old daughter rushing out during the fight with a bucket of water, drenching the fire which the Indians had started in a nearby haystack in the hope of destroying the house, and getting back safely to cover through a storm of arrows and bullets. After a hard and a losing fight of several hours, the red devils gave it up as a bad job, and returned to the American and other ranches to the eastward, to complete their work of destruction, and to gather in any

plunder that might have escaped them the previous day.

Godfrey, though not boastful, seems quite proud of his victory, the story of which is now known to every pilgrim and in every cabin on the Plains; and well he may be, for his foes were fifty to one. He is, and always will be, one of my frontier heroes. I have only one little bit of a grudge against him. Our drivers say the stock need some hay, and I buy a few armfuls of the precious feed from him, for which he charges me twelve cents a pound. These figures seem innocent enough at first, but when, after a little mental arithmetic, I discover that this is at the rate of *two hundred and forty dollars a ton*, I am somewhat staggered, and begin to suspect that perhaps the old man isn't living out here in the Indian country entirely "for his health."

For five miles beyond Godfrey's, we neither meet nor see one living thing in our afternoon drive, and then we pass a little adobe about fifteen feet square, the occupant of which is a very dirty-faced man, apparently

living there alone. What his daily work is, if he has any, or why he should be all by himself in this exposed and defenceless fashion on the war-swept Plains — these are riddles as incomprehensible to us as is the fact that he doesn't treat himself to an occasional bath, or at least get some of the outer coats of dirt off his face, with the Platte river flowing wide and free a hundred yards away.

Another five-mile stretch brings us to Beaver Creek station, and three miles more, all through a country entirely bare of settlement, to Beaver Creek ranche, where, to our amazement, we are obliged to cross a toll-bridge and pay a toll of three dollars for our two wagons, "to help keep the road in order between here and Julesburg!" We regard this as a swindle, but at the same time accept it as an indication that we'll soon be getting "out of the wilderness," for, irritating as toll-roads and their charges generally are, one always associates them in his mind with settled communities and civilization. We drive down into the fine bottom-land between the

house and the Platte, and make camp a quarter-mile from the river, after a day's work of twenty-eight miles — the longest drive, with the exception of one day with an exactly similar record, that we have made on our entire journey.

Just before coming into camp we at last enjoy our first view of the Rocky Mountains. It is rather curious and novel, though not very thrilling. As the sun is dropping in the west, we see a little to the south of it two small, dark-colored pyramids which seem to be just peeping over or resting on the horizon. The one next the sun, which is twice the size of the other, we are told is the summit of Long's Peak, and by the road the distance to it from our camp is a good hundred and fifty miles. As we approach them we shall now "raise" them rapidly, and in a day or two we may expect the whole range to gradually come into view.

SUNDAY, *April 16th*, Thirty-seventh Day: Another of those lovely spring mornings.

Easter Sunday, too. We have no eggs in camp, and there are no hen-roosts in sight, so we substitute boiled beans for breakfast — warmed over. This is our sixth Sunday out from Atchison, and I hear talk among the boys about our being in the Mountains by next Sunday — but personally I am troubled with doubts.

We take the road leisurely, at half-past eight, and we have still a fine level sweep of open country in front of us, the width from bluffs to river being three or four miles. We cover eleven miles over this fine road by eleven o'clock, which is "express" speed, and take a long nooning at Douglas ranche. Six miles beyond this, without incident, we reach Junction ranche, and not far away are the ruins of old Fort Morgan, one of the trading posts of the "thirties." There is a telegraph station at the ranche, and the operator horrifies us with the news that President Lincoln and Secretary Seward were assassinated in Washington on Friday evening. We get just the briefest telegraphic account, with no details,

and that makes it all the more a subject of wonder and of general speculation by the whole train.

Two miles beyond, at Junction stage station, we come upon another camp of Colorado boys, and also upon a problem, which creates more or less discussion. From this point there seem to be two roads to Denver; that is our present road continues to follow the windings of the river, and the distance is just one hundred miles, while, by leaving the Platte at this point and running off southwesterly straight across the country, the other, called the "Cut-off," is twenty miles shorter. The latter fact is somewhat tempting, but there prove to be some weighty arguments on the other side, so we conclude to stick to the stream that has been so pleasant a companion for three hundred miles, and we continue on for a couple of miles further to where Bijou creek, a little tributary, empties into it from the south, and here we make a pleasant camp. The old Platte during the afternoon has been narrowing down considerably, and is not more

than two hundred yards wide at our camp-ground, while at the opposite side of it the bluffs have suddenly come nearly down to the bank.

MONDAY, *April 17th*, Thirty-eighth Day: Fine morning again. We are on the road before seven o'clock, and we still have the same noble plain ahead of us between the bluffs and the river. The latter makes quite a bend here, and we leave it for a few hours and cut "across lots" to save a mile or two, striking it again about noon at a point opposite Fremont's Orchard, which at the time of the great Pathfinder's first pilgrimage through here, twenty-odd years ago, was a fine grove of cottonwood trees; they are somewhat thinned out now, although no one seems to know why. We stop here for a leisurely nooning. During the afternoon we pass several eastbonnd wagons, and a few soldiers quartered in a log cabin by the roadside, and between five and six make camp a quarter-mile from the river at Stony Point, or Kempton's ranche.

After our first view of the summits of Long and its twin peak night before last, the mountain range yesterday gradually pushed up above the horizon in a very irregular and eccentric way — by sections, as we travelled slowly toward it — and by night we still had only about the upper half of it in sight, although perhaps nearly all its length had come into view; but this morning the whole magnificent stretch of hills seemed at one bound to clear the plain and rise before us in all their majesty — one hundred and fifty miles in length of dark blue range in front, and behind and above them the line of eternal snow, glistening in the glorious sunlight and resting on a background of a sky of such deep blue as none of us have ever seen before — and we have them in front of us, almost directly across our road, all day, at an apparent distance of no more than a score of miles, although as we go into camp to-night they are to all appearance as far away as when we first looked upon them this morning. The real distance straightaway west

from our camp is probably sixty miles to the foot-hills.

TUESDAY, *April 18th*, Thirty-ninth Day: Fine morning, and warm almost as summer. We get under way early — at a little after seven, as we imagine we can now almost see our goal, and every one is impatient, and anxious to push along — so that by noon, in spite of a rather hilly road, we cover sixteen miles, and then indulge in a long rest for lunch at a point a little below Gerry's ranche, which we don't visit, in spite of the fact that we might enjoy female society by doing so. The keeper of the ranche is a Frenchman, whose name the Plainsmen have twisted into "Gerry," but who is in fact Monsieur Giraud, and who, like his countryman Beauvais, has had a trading post on the river for many years; and to cheer his lonely life he has indulged himself in the companionship of two squaws from the Sioux nation, each of whom has an equal right to call herself Mme. "Gerry."

Hopkins leaves us here, and pushes on, reducing us to eight wagons and thirteen men. In fact, since the Mountains have come in sight, there has begun a general breaking up of the train. One of our leading mules has been threatening to give out for a day or two, after all his sturdy and faithful work for all these weeks, and we are obliged to humor him so much this afternoon that we cover but six miles, and all the others of the party push on ahead, leaving us at last "out of the procession," so that our two wagons find themselves again alone when we go into camp, at Latham's ranche, not over fifty-five miles from Denver — "so near and yet so far," for with a lame mule no one dare predict to-night how soon we can start on again. There is a strong wind blowing as we turn into the wagons, and during the night a light snow-fall.

WEDNESDAY, *April 19th*, Fortieth Day: Rather cloudy in the early morning, but clear and beautiful again in an hour or two, and we can't drink in enough of this glorious

mountain air, which makes every nerve tingle. We feel braced up and stimulated to extra effort, and we therefore chafe the more at our enforced delay of this entire morning, which is sacrificed to our lame mule. We hitch up by two o'clock, and manage to make a short, leisurely drive in the afternoon — six miles only — and camp at Barbour's ranche. Here we overtake one wagon of our old train, and arrange to keep together now to the end, which, they tell us, we can reach in two more days. Our mule intimates, in a mule's way, that he thinks he can brace up for two twenty-five-mile drives, after the rest we have given him, so we begin to talk very confidently of what we shall do in Denver, on "day after to-morrow" — or rather on the evening of that day — and there is a singular unanimity in our expressed purpose of finding the shortest road to a restaurant on our arrival — if the town has one — and in indulging in porterhouse steaks, and oysters, and little trifles of that kind (which are likely to make our supper cost five dollars "a cover," or thereabouts),

and having them served at a real table, with a white table-cloth, and white napkins, and with china and glassware to eat and drink from, and chairs to sit on, and so on and so forth.

All this may seem finical and fussy, no doubt, to those pampered pets of luxury who indulge in such things every day, and take them as a matter of course; but to properly appreciate them they must first cross the Plains afoot, and eat their "peck of dirt"—which Plains tradition allots as the necessary portion of every pilgrim who would graduate from the class of "tenderfoot." They must learn to take their meals, if weather conditions are unfavorable, when and how they can get them: standing up against the lee side of a wagon in a windstorm, when the cook-stove has a sulky fit, and the bit of cold bacon or soggy "fried bread" left over from breakfast is gritty with the prairie sand that fills the air; or crouching in the mud or snow, and burning their eyes out, Indian fashion, over a smoky fire of "buffalo chips," the only fuel obtainable on certain treeless sections of the road.

There are enough of experiences such as these not only to make the fair weather meals delightful by contrast, but to invest with a sybaritic quality the idea of the well-appointed table of the ordinary home or restaurant of the settled community.

THURSDAY, *April 20th*, Forty-first Day: Cloudy again this morning, with a strong north wind blowing. We are up early, and leave the ranche soon after seven. The road, still running along the river bank, or at a distance of never more than a half-mile, now makes a great turn southward for Denver, and the Mountains, which have been directly in our front, are now on our right hand, distant by an air-line probably twenty-five miles, but seemingly not over four or five. The air is very cold, with the cutting north wind directly on our backs. We make good progress, however, and just before noon reach Fort St. Vrain's, which thirty years ago was an important trading post, but of which now only the adobe walls remain. We stop at a log house near by,

in which we find a cheerful fire, and avail ourselves of the chance to make some hot coffee, and eat a very comfortable lunch. Most cheerful of all, however, is the sight of three women — a part of the family of the cabin. Females are so scarce on the Plains that I don't think we've seen more than a half-dozen in all since leaving the River, and when we do meet one she becomes an object of especial interest.

We move on by one o'clock, with the cold somewhat moderated, and we notice a decided change in the appearance of the country. There are pretty little groves of cottonwood trees at intervals along the river, and on either bank are scattered every few hundred yards neat little houses, evidently the homes of those who are fast converting this broad plain to the left of the road into thriving ranches. Seven miles out on our afternoon drive we pass the adobe ruins of Fort Lupton, another abandoned trading post of the "thirties" or "forties," and three miles beyond we make camp at Twenty-five-Mile

ranche, where we find some more of our old fellow-travellers, who have lain by to-day, with Denver only a day's march ahead of them! —but there is no accounting for the whims of the regular Plainsman, as I have had occasion to remark before.

FRIDAY, *April 21st*, Forty-second Day: Unless we have some serious accident, we know this is to be our last day on the Plains. We are all eager and impatient for the road, and every one is up early, and we are moving by shortly after seven o'clock. The morning is fine, and the route lies through a pleasant farming country, with plenty of trees to relieve our weary eyes, and with rail fences indicating that we are entering a district of homesteads and permanent settlement. Before noon we are at Twelve-Mile House, and already craning our necks for an as yet impossible peep at the city that marks the end of our Plains pilgrimage. Here we stop for a leisurely lunch. The weather changes abruptly, and we are hardly well started on our after-

noon drive before we are in the thick of a heavy snow-squall. We push along with a superb indifference to this, however, and in a couple of hours the road leads us over a bit of high ground which, they say, is but four miles out, and from which we at last indulge ourselves in the luxury of a first view of the metropolis of the famous gold country.

The most we can see is a scattering lot of log cabins and frame shanties, in the midst of which, and quite imposing by contrast, rises the brick chimney of what they tell us is the United States Mint. It lies directly in our course, and as we presently pass it at close range on entering the city, we are a little disappointed at finding it but a small one-story affair — but we are in Denver anyhow, and however insignificant the place appears to us, fresh from an Eastern city, the one over-shadowing fact remains that we have at last successfully ended our pilgrimage; and as we finally drive into the "Mammoth Corral" on Blake street, where we and our animals together put up for the night, we are quite as

well contented as though we were registering our arrival in the handsome lobby of the Fifth Avenue Hotel back in our old home. Wagons, stock and all are soon snugly stowed away, and we rush off in a body to find the restaurant in which we have been for so long promising ourselves a royal spread.

Along the several streets on our route we are again reminded of the martyred President by the mourning drapery that covers the front of the banks and stores, and in fact of the houses generally in the down-town quarter. We are piloted to a famous restaurant on Larimer street, and before we leave it we make a generous addition to our host's profits for the day; although, to be candid, I can recall more than one meal by the camp-fire after a hard day's march, when the homely fare was relished with a zest far greater than attends the somewhat pretentious courses of our city *restaurateur* — who, however, does "his level best," and his "best" is indeed very good. We stroll about for a while after supper, and wind up at the Denver Theatre, fairly well out

on the dark prairie, where we see a thrilling melodrama, and where our seven make a notable addition to the audience. Somewhere toward midnight we find our way back to the "corral," and tumble into our wagons with the comfortable feeling that we shall not be routed out to-morrow morning to take the road, and that, if we choose, we may sleep the clock round, and until we sleep away absolutely all the accumulated fatigues of our long pilgrimage.

Those last few lines above were somewhat rashly written, in the first flush of satisfaction at having safely reached a terminal point in a settlement of houses and people, and in the midst of moving, active life, after being lost in the lonely wilderness for six weeks; but while we hasten to indulge ourselves in the comforts of civilized life (such as it is), we are fully aware that we are not yet quite done with the road. We have, it is true, crossed the Plains: but we are bound for the mountain gold mines: these are still forty

miles away — and if we can believe these Denver people, the road is beset with many kinds of dangers, and we must take much thought before venturing into the hills with heavily-loaded wagons at this season of mud and snow and possible floods. They even suggest avalanches!

They seem a strange lot, these Denverites, to judge from this talk they give us about the Mountains. We doubt if one in ten has had any personal experience of them, and we soon come to laugh at their strange tales of bug-a-boos by the way. The gold mines are up there — they know that much of them, but that seems to be about the measure both of their knowledge and of their interest, except that which attaches them to all arrivals from off the Plains, whom they naturally presume to be bound there sooner or later, but whom they conceive it to be their interest to hold *en route* as long as possible — at least, that is the way we construe their solicitude on our behalf.

We are indeed willing enough to take a

bit of a rest, and employ our time for a day or two in seeing the town, which is attractive from its rough novelty. It is decidedly crude — mainly built of frame shacks and log cabins, and these are mostly occupied by rough warehouses, outfitting stores, "old cloe" shops, whiskey joints, gambling hells, and concert "dives" — these at least predominate in the down-town district with which we make ourselves most familiar. The streets are narrow channels of mud and snow, ankle-deep. These are choked with traffic; lined on either side with prairie-schooners and every other description of wagon and team, loading or unloading: some, like our own, just off the Plains, some in from the Mountains, or the Arkansas country, or far Santa Fe, or bound out in these directions.

Such sidewalks as there are — built of narrow strips of short planking, raised but a few inches above the mud of the roadway — are alive with curious motley groupings of humankind: freighters, bullwhackers, Plainsmen, and pilgrims like ourselves; dark-browed

"Greasers," in wide sombreros and other picturesque attire; tanned and bearded miners, just down from the mountain gulches, scattering their dust in a "high old time," after the fashion of their kind. There is a preponderance everywhere of roughs and toughs, otherwise unclassed, but advertising themselves in their make-ups, in which heavy revolvers and cartridge-belts are much in evidence — scowling, quarrelsome swaggerers these are, many of whom will surely some day, when a general weeding-out takes place, decorate some of the bridges on the river at the end of a hempen rope, with their heels dangling over the stream.

There is the isolated figure of the old frontiersman, trapper or trader, long-haired and grizzled, surveying the scene with a quiet disdain, and regarding no doubt with regret this boisterous invasion of the solitudes that have been his home for thirty years; and sprinkled here and there are seedy-looking loungers, whose clothes suggest an antique mercantile cut and sedentary pursuits of other and hap-

pier days, but indicate fallen fortunes no more clearly than they do their wearers' entire want of harmony with their present surroundings — strolling aimlessly about, in common with much other miscellaneous human driftwood borne hither by the mighty current that has set in and is still flowing westward — ever westward — toward these treasure-laden hills.

All this is entertaining enough for a time, but the town is small, and the passing show soon begins to pall from its monotony. By Monday we have tired of loafing about, and concluded to take our chances of the perilous ascent of the Mountains. We "hitch up" after breakfast, and get a fairly early start. The weather is superb, the valley roads good enough to the foot-hills, and we make camp the first evening at the "Golden Gate;" the second day we ascend and descend Guy Hill, although the first means a complete unloading of the wagons and five hours of hard work, while the descent on the far side is accomplished in fifteen minutes — to our second night's camp in Guy gulch; the next day it is

fairly easy work to and over Smith Hill into Clear creek, thence up the cañon into and through Black Hawk, Mountain City and "Central," where, under the shadow of Quartz Hill, we finally deliver wagons, teams and freight to their owner, and end our pilgrimage in just two months lacking one day after bidding good-bye to old Gotham.

In going over my record of daily distances travelled between the River and Denver, I find their total to be 672 miles. Each interval from point to point covered in the daily march was set down at the figures given at the time by those living on the ground or at each station, but was adopted only after careful comparison with our own estimates — and we had not been on the road many days before we became fairly good judges of the speed of our teams, making all proper allowances for varying conditions of the road, etc. The accepted length of the route, as held at the time by the Overland Stage Company, was 650 miles — that is, 250 miles from Atchison to

Fort Kearney, and 400 from Kearney to Denver — and this I believe to have been as near an exact computation as possible without a survey. This would allow for a total of errors in my daily computations of 22 miles — and I am sure this is liberal. Our best daily figure was 28 miles (recorded twice), and our poorest one and a half miles. It was said by old Plainsmen with whom we travelled in company now and then, that the weather we encountered was exceptionally bad; that, while we might of course expect storms in the spring season, we had more than our share. In spite of this, however, we suffered no hardships; and while we experienced personal discomfort now and then, it was always soon forgotten in the cheer and warmth of our next camp-fire.

It was a saying in Atchison in those days that every one — willy-nilly — exposed his true nature when he crossed the Plains; and we were regaled with many legends of the breaking up of whole trains when they got well along on the road, from disagreements caused by one man's ill-nature or another's hoggish-

ness, brought to the surface by irritating conditions inseparable from the journey. Among these we of course heard the ancient story of the two men who started for Pike's Peak with one wagon and one yoke of oxen; who quarrelled before they had accomplished half their pilgrimage, and then divided up their belongings, cutting the wagon in two, each taking a pair of wheels and one ox, and each thereafter going his own separate way. We happily accomplished our journey with no clashing more serious than a sharp word now and then, in the bustle of beginning a day's journey, or, perhaps, a grumble from some tired and hungry straggler at its close. Our whole pilgrimage, from first to last, was, after all, much in the nature of an extended picnic excursion; and when we finally parted in the Mountains and went our separate ways, it was with "God-speed" to one another, and mutual kindly wishes that the new country might have much of good fortune in store for every one of us.